

Turkey to the Solent over two years

4,000 miles on our first motorboat

Clive Forestier-Walker



Christian and myself spent much of lockdown thinking about what our next adventure could look like.

Our 'Project': to find a boating solution for the next 10 year, after a life of sailing different yachts. Long distances as a couple does not get any easier with the passing of time, decreasing eyesight and increasing wobbling on the foredeck

Two years ago Nordhavn produced a new 41ft motor yacht which could well meet our requirements. Two Beta Marine 85HP engines, giving a range of around 2,000 miles on a full tank with stabilisers to steady any rolling motion. It has four berths (or six if using the saloon) and is Category A Rated, which is unusual for a relatively small motor yacht. We visited Nordhavn's yard in Turkey before deciding to go ahead with the conversion from sail to motor.

Turkey to Tunisia

15 May 2022: We left Istanbul, with Julian Berney RCC aboard, under the Stars and Stripes with and a weird jumble of US letters and numbers on the stern. As we did not yet own the boat a Turkish skipper was provided for our first 220nm leg through the Dardennes to the nearest Greek Island, Lesbos.



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Casalamy, our little ship

The skipper spoke no English but it was comforting that with some sign language we started to get a grip on how to operate this somewhat unfamiliar machine.

At Lesbos Mitilini, Neil and Philip arrived from the Nordhavn's Hamble Office. We did a few circuits and bumps, principally stern-to manoeuvres. It was then time to accept the boat, sign off acres of paper and pay the final 10%, strip off the US boat name, apply *Casalamy*, remove our large Stars and Stripes, and finally hoist our own burgee and ensign.

Much is debated about the 90 days in 180 day Schengen restriction, suffice to say that we found that no two ports had the same system and there is no central online database. Either it is the full rigmarole, or the port has no idea of what Schengen is all about, and in some places ne'er do wells waited hoping to exploit the confusion.

Having bid farewell to the Nordhavn crew we set off south for 45nm to the Turkish port of Çeşme, which is a designated Port of Entry. All our neighbours on the pontoon were crews who from dawn to dusk washed and polished in the anticipation that the owners could appear at any time. We did not try to compete, but rather to enjoy the lively town with some excellent fish restaurants. We arranged for a local engineer to help us with the 50hr oil change for both engines and gearbox, given the logistical problem of disposing of 25ltrs of oil.

Two days later (27 May) we left Çeşme to travel south in Turkish waters. Destination, a small cove with a nearby town, Aliççati. The following morning, engines started, up anchor, but alarmingly no steering. Into the lazarette to find that the hydraulic ram was not responding. We called up the marina, but the response was only in Turkish. Therefore, whilst very new to twin engine yachts we managed to steer to the marina entrance with engines alone where a RIB beckoned us in. Problem was that the harbour master did not know what our problem was, so we had to 'Mediterranean moor', stern to, with the harbour master somewhat

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incredulous as to why we looked so amateurish. We did it, with no bumps and no help so achieved something with aplomb. A call to Murat Telegren who owns and runs the factory in Tuzla, Istanbul set the recovery plan in motion. Murat and Nuri, the electrician, arrived having sourced a replacement hydraulic ram. They left the factory at midnight arriving with us at 0800, working all day to fix this and a few other minor snagging issues.

Then to Khios, back in Greece, where granddaughter Skye and friend Arabella arrived, full of enthusiasm. Ay Kyrios Around was 58nm away and we anchored in a popular bay, to dinghy ashore, only to find it was a nudist beach. Unfortunately at Ormos Naosis, rounding the point at the exit to the bay, the sea was confused and Arabella feeling seasick was definitely not enjoying the experience. They decided to jump ship for a more land based holiday meeting up with fellow Edinburgh University friends.

We continued for 42nm to Adhamas, where we anchored offshore, and then on to Elafonosis, a major milestone as we had reached the southernmost point of the Peloponnese islands. This was real natural Greece and very welcoming. Now travelling NW to Koroni and, having achieved some 50 to 70nm on most days we could at last slow down. That said, travelling at 7kts+ with a following wind in a straight line and in comfort out of the mid-day sun was a pleasure!

Pilos, written up as idyllic in the pilot book, was not what we expected. The marina, built some 20 years ago had not been completed. No water, electricity or shore cleats, it was full of live aboard squatters, none of whom would welcome us alongside. However we managed to wriggle into a very small slot. We needed fuel and two fisherman, who were painting their boat nearby, organised a small bowser, with a fairly large price. In town a chandler greeted us with a cold drink and a bottle of home-made olive oil before we even mentioned what we required, which was a couple of warps and 5m of chain to assemble our kedge anchor. A visit to the port policeman merely turned out as a chat as he was unaware of Schengen.

From Pilos a short 26nm to Katakolon. Making friends with neighbours we all decided to take the 50 minute train to the 8th BC site of the original Ancient Olympic Games. Absolutely fascinating with the ruins sufficient to work out how the site was run. We even managed a short sprint on the original running track which was surrounded by grassy banks with room for 40,000 spectators. A very worthwhile day trip

Ay Nikolaos is a small village at the northern tip of the island of Zakynthos, just a short distance south of Kefalonia. It soon became clear that the harbour master also owned a restaurant so no mooring fee. So far, the electrical sockets had all been 32 amps, but not here. He kindly produced a 16amp socket adaptor, whilst we were eating.

Next day we anchored off Argostoli, the capital of Kefalonia. Ideal for picking up our daughter Camilla. A short trip to Fiskardo, a Venetian village at the northern tip of Kefalonia for a lunchtime stop, after which we made for Porto Spilia on Megansi

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(8nm). We moored next to a ferry berth, climbed up to a fort for a spectacular view and dined, accompanied by a lady singer churning out Adele!

We transited the 3.5nm Levkas Canal, a useful short cut north towards Corfu. Just north of Levkas is the entrance to the 20nm long Ambracian Gulf which we decided to explore, spending the night at Vonista. We anchored off an island with a long walking causeway leading to the sleepy town: it was Sunday and certainly not a tourist destination, with just locals and us enjoying the beach and a swim. We needed some potatoes but all the shops were closed. Camilla was not to be defeated and acquired a free bag of chips from a kebab shop.

Pilot books enthuse about the island of Paxos and its principal town Gaios. Berthing is Med style to the quayside in a narrow passage between the quay and an island. Little room for manoeuvres. We arrived at 1230 after an early start from Vonista. The fun started when the flotillas arrived. A lively German crew arrived, all wearing T shirts emblazoned with 'Captain' so naively we assumed at least competent crew. Not so, having dropped their anchor they succeeded in pinning themselves at right angles across ours and the neighbouring boats bows, fortunately no damage done. Despite all this Gaios is a very pretty town, albeit the quayside restaurants were mainly rammed with flotilla crews drinking 'til the wee hours.

We weighed anchor at 0715 and inevitably found the German anchor across our chain. No problem to remove. We had booked a berth at Port Mandraki situated adjacent to the dominant Venetian fort, and a very short walk to the centre of

Corfu Town.

The marina has an excellent restaurant, showers, electricity and water. Of course the town is full of tourists but with a happy atmosphere including street bands. With Camilla about to depart and another daughter, Liza joining we took a taxi to Mon Repos. Once a Royal Palace it was the location for filming parts of 'The



Port Mandraki beneath the dominant Venetian fort

Durrell's' TV series. After this lovely excursion it was time for us to taxi to the main marina/port of Gouvia to sign out of Greece. As usual a long wait, overseen by an aggressive lady who claimed she was too busy to deal with us.

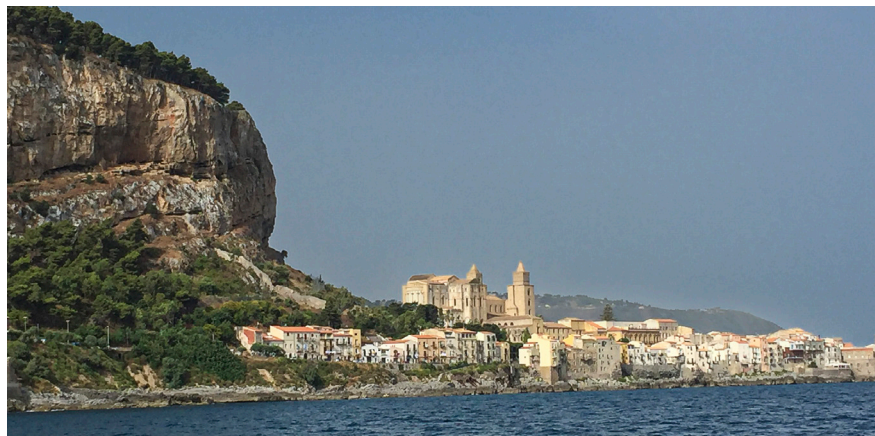
An uneventful overnight passage across the Adriatic until Liza at the helm spotted an AIS target on a reciprocal course. She was determined to discover the

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'intentions' so called up on VHF to discover it was a huge cruise liner which was obliged to keep clear passing on our starboard side. Not totally familiar with radio procedure she signed off with "Bye-bye and good night" and received an equally cordial response!

As planned, we reached Crotoni, our Port of Entry into Italy and some 140NM away on the 'ball of the foot', at 0830. We were greeted by a man with hot croissants and the hoisting of the Union Jack. He offered to be our agent but we declined and walked a mile to immigration, where we sat in a corridor for 2 hours watching the staff, in immaculate whites, topped with gold trimmings ignoring us. We decided to cast off as soon as possible and motor south for 20NM to La Castella, in a marine protected area. An excellent decision with a friendly harbour master, a massive Roman Fort to explore and a memorable fish restaurant.

Much is written about the Straits of Messina and its potential challenges so it is difficult to decide the best time to cross this narrow passage. Factors are, opposing tidal flows from each sea, different temperatures of each sea leading to fog and squalls and at times the surface flow is contrary to the flow at 1-2 metres below the surface which does little to maintain steerage way. Our experience was a little of everything from flat calm to confused sea and then fog in this busy waterway, and suddenly we were back to normal slight sea and sunshine. Destination, Vulcano, at 44NM, the closest of the Aeolian Islands. Anchored in the leeward bay on the island which was busy, but with a draft of only 1.4m we were able to find a spot close to the sandy shore. Vulcano lives up to its name with a notable sulphur smell. From there it was a short motor north to the island of Isola Salina where we anchored off the town, enjoyed some shopping and an excellent dinner ashore. The following morning Liza departed by ferry to mainland Sicily and a flight home. We followed for 34NM to Capo d'Orlando, on the north coast of Sicily, where the friendly harbour master directed us to an engineer repair shop. We had carelessly Approaching our first stop in Sicily, Cefalu is dominated by a large cathedral



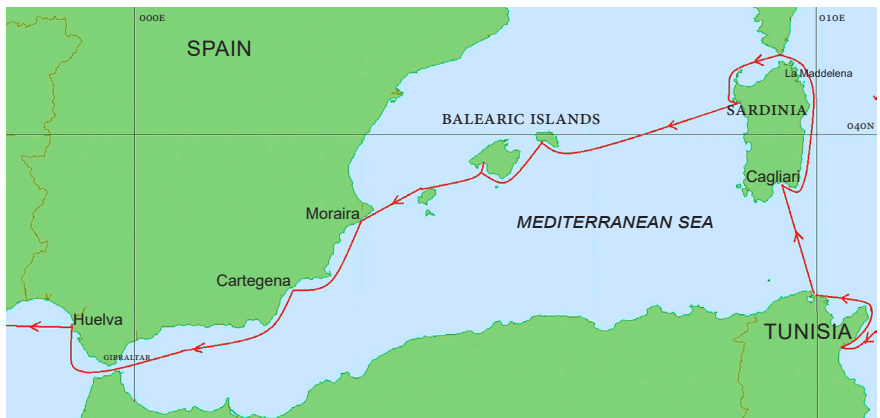
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bent the dinghy crane stainless steel locking pin. A tall muscular engineer did the job perfectly with the aid of a sledge hammer!

After an enjoyable few days coastal hopping towards the western end of Sicily our last stop was Marsala, with its grand buildings and wine of the same name, taken as an aperitif.

It was now time to set off for Tunisia where we left the boat in Hammamet, out of Schengen and away from the intense heat. The marina is well found with good security, but with few yachting services. We departed for the UK on 10 July returning on 4 October.

Julian Berney joined us for another spell aboard, his electronics experience having proved invaluable during commissioning in Istanbul. Before departure we filled up with 3,000 litres of diesel at 53p/litre giving us a range of around 2,000nm. First stop was Bizerete (107nm), on the north coast of Tunisia. A charming town with a large fort and huge market. Having checked in at the marina we asked if we could simultaneously check out as we intended to leave at dawn, the following morning. This was not possible so at 0530 we knocked on the doors of the police and customs, finding them asleep on the floor. More forms were duly filled in and more photographs taken.



Tunisia to Spain

Destination was Cagliari on the southern coast of Sardinia and we approached the harbour at 0200. Multiple buoys, and lights on water and ashore, needed negotiating. At that point the Garmin chart plotter 'crashed'. Having studied the pilot book we eventually located our destination. We found that this marina was a haven for live-aboards and just as well as yet another starter motor relay failed. To the rescue they came, delighted to become involved, and a spare was found. Beers all round.

We were due for a crew change in Olbia and weather conditions favoured the east coast of Sardinia. En-route we visited Porto Corallo and Arbatax. The coast



Daughter Susanna MacInnes and her paintings in La Maddalena

Caselsardo to Alghero, well placed for back to back crew changes. Alghero itself is a magnificent town dominated by a large fort which contained both shops and good restaurants. Susie departed, with some lovely paintings and Camilla Byk arrived with granddaughter Eloise.

It was time to depart Sardinia, with very happy memories, and make our way to the Balearics, a distance of 190NM. On passage, two robins alighted for a rest.

is dramatic and quiet. On reaching Olbia, Julian Berney disembarked for the UK and Susie MacInnes, our artist daughter, joined with paints at the ready. This dictated where we should go so Susie could paint, and the scenic town of La Maddalena proved to be an excellent choice.

Susie sold two paintings on the spot, one to a lady on holiday from the USA. Next was a short passage around the north of Sardinia via

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One flew into the cabin and perched on the steering wheel! Camilla carefully caught it and took it to the aft deck where it continued to snooze for a couple of hours well rested. A lovely interlude on an otherwise uneventful passage. We left at 0600 on 19 October, with a calm sea arriving at Mahon, Minorca at sunrise the following morning.

Hot weather demanded that we should find a beach, so hailing a taxi, we set off with the driver giving him the discretion as to the destination. Alighting at the end of the road, we strolled to the beach which was 100% nudist! Remaining totally overdressed, we conversed with many of the nude occupants. By the end 'so what'!

63 more miles motoring brought us to Porto Collon, Majorca. Again hot, so we walked to a crowded beach nearby. Christian had not managed to contact a cousin, a superyacht captain, who was using Majorca as a base. However, an extraordinary coincidence followed. We asked one of the locals whether she knew Arthur Cowan: Yes, she said, they are our best friends! Later we enjoyed meeting up with his family for dinner at their lovely farmhouse far from the bustle of Palma, our next stop.

The last lap for 2022 was Cartagena, much recommended as a safe port to overwinter. On arrival we were directed to the live-aboard pontoon, where we were greeted with an invitation to the weekly BBQ. A very friendly group, who advised us on everything, importantly, introducing us to Andreas, who would look after

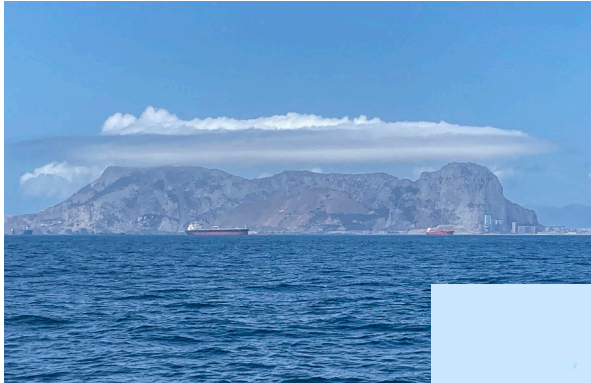
Our winter 2022 berth in Cartagena



the boat, principally washing off the sand. Unlike many ugly 'Costa' towns Cartagena has charm. Inevitably, we did have some issues typical of a new boat so Murat, the CEO of the Turkey yard, visited in February 2023 and either fixed the problem or arranged for the nearby yard to undertake the work.

Spain to the UK

We returned to *Casalamy* on 7 May 2023. Weed and pink barnacles had certainly thrived in our absence so a lift out was organised. The power wash removed much of the antifoul so rather than wait a few days, we took the view that we would be moving most days so less chance of much growth. Our plan was to make for Gibraltar (170nm) stopping en route at Malaga where Arthur Cowan (superyacht captain) had agreed to join us for the leg up to Lisbon. We called up Malaga where there was no room, so plan was changed to Motril, a few miles further east, which was much



Gibraltar looms ahead

more accommodating. Christian was delighted to have Arthur aboard for our nervous dash across Orca Alley. ‘The Rock’ appeared through the mist and we called up both marinas to be told that there was no room, so we paused only to top up with fuel (last fill up was Tunisia) which indicated that a full tank had given us a range of around 1,800nm. Algeciras marina, just across the Spanish border, accommodated us. We had to pay homage in Gibraltar for two reasons: Government House where my forebear General Sir Frederick Forestier-Walker was governor (1905-1910) and of course fish and chips with a pint of bitter.

We made four stops between Gibraltar and Lisbon (Huelva, Masango, Portimo and Sines (285nm). Huelva is most famous for being the port town in which, in the 15th century, Christopher Columbus recruited sailors and prayed to the town’s patron saint for a safe journey.

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His voyages set off from Huelva and now it is home for three excellent replicas of his ships, Santa Maria, Niña and Pinta.

Leaving the Mediterranean for the Atlantic Ocean brought about a distinctive change from generally calm to constant northerly winds and big rolling seas, resulting in much slower progress and hence shorter daily legs.

There was also the threat of orca attacks which were frequent in the area during our passage. Arthur Cowan had an excellent app which gave a running commentary of their location. Since we were never far from the coast our plan would be to make good speed to the 20m depth contour, inside which orcas have not been active. Also, with bronze rudders and 24" diameter props we did not represent a juicy target.

From Lisbon, where we had arrived on 18 May, we continued north to Porto and into Spanish waters. Looking at the Marine Traffic app we discovered that Oliver and Sophie Stanley (RCC) were just north of Vigo travelling South. Oliver was a subaltern when I was a company commander in the Coldstream Guards. A very jolly dinner aboard ensued in the pretty port of Baiona, just south of Vigo. Fed up with the constant failure of the starter motor relays we found a very competent electrician who decided that 40 amps was not sufficient but more importantly he set up a hardwire connection with switch.

Our plan was to cruise along the north coast of Spain as far as Bilbao and then make for Arcachon, the only feasible port on the passage to the Gironde estuary. We visited Muxia, La Coruña, Ciedra, Viveiro, Ribadeo, Luanco, Rabadisela, Santander and Bilbao which has a 'transit' Marina Santurzi, free for 48 hours. Our overall impression was that these ports were very friendly, much cheaper than elsewhere averaging around €20-25 a night and very little tourism, despite plenty to see; forts, churches and town squares with a few restaurants.

The approach to Arcachon is interesting. To enter involves calling up the Semaphore Tower for guidance, a 24/7 service. Once permission is given, entry requires following a well-marked channel for about 10 miles to Arcachon town. A magnificent inland waterway, buzzing with kite surfers, dinghy racing swimming and very good restaurants.

Port Medoc at the mouth of the Gironde River followed and then on to La Rochelle, at last we were in familiar home waters and we even remembered a little restaurant in a back street from a visit many years ago.

At La Rochelle, our eldest daughter Camilla joined again, this time with Sasha, the granddaughter of Andrew Napier, another Coldstreamer. Despite them having had to leave London at 0400, Camilla wanted to go to Île de Ré, so we did. A fun harbour through the narrow lock gate entrance, where on arrival we hired bikes to explore the island. Next wish on her 'bucket list' was Les Sables d'Olonne, having been an avid follower of the Vendée Globe yacht race. By a stroke of luck whilst signing in, we were allocated a berth on the VG arrivals pontoon, complete with a couple of the Vendée Globe yachts!

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A few more well known stops on the way north, Île d'Yeu, Île de Houat and La Trinité before Lorient where Camilla and Sasha departed and Peter Booth, yet another Coldstream ally, joined. We managed to explore the Odet River before an overnight stop in Lochtudy there being no berths available in Bénodet. Audierne has much improved its marina facilities since our last visit and we were allocated a hammerhead berth.

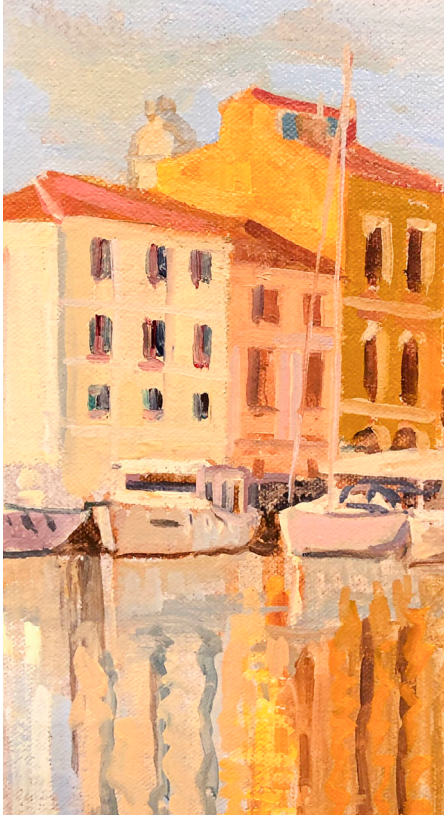
We worked out our plan in order to pass through the Raz de Seine at the turn of the tide. Later, and fortunately, I noticed on the marina map, a footnote that the ebb tide reached 6kn on our pontoon, which would rule out a safe departure. We therefore left early and anchored in the bay of Saint Evette's for 3 hours before leaving for the Raz, which was blissfully calm. Thereafter we followed the well-trodden route via Camaret, L'Aber Wrac'h to Roscoff, where long term French friend Benedicte, with young, joined us for the trip to Guernsey.

After relaxing with family and friends, and taking on 1,700 litres of fuel at 74p/litre at Sampson Harbour, it was time to leave. The weather was changeable with wind F4-6 on the quarter but the boat behaved well through the Alderney Race en route to Cherbourg. The following day we set off for the Needles. It was a bumpy ride, but the stabilisers performed well - we never took any green water on deck. Approaching the Bridge buoy we changed from 'Heading Hold' to 'Standby', thereby taking manual control. A rogue wave caught our stern spinning us through 360 degrees. Full speed needed to be applied to regain control. Closing the Hurst Narrows, we noticed the Border Control vessel and they deployed their RIB to visit us. It was much too rough to board, so the skipper wisely backed off, merely asking how many were aboard and why had we come from Cherbourg? "Because we like France" was our reply with a smile.

Prior to taking delivery of the new *Casalamy* we had seldom ever been aboard a motor yacht. In the first few days we were somewhat nervous as to how we should set up the seemingly complex array of high tech driven switches. For example, we knew that in order to cook, the inverter had to be switched on. So, the morning cup of tea kettle was fine, but don't fry an egg at the same time as that would trip the circuit breaker. Solved: the inverter is rated at 3KW, but so was the kettle! Cooking at sea, with an induction hob, oven and microwave required that the 7KW generator be switched on. In very hot weather aircon is a luxury, but again watch the KW consumption. Launching the dinghy off the roof with the crane relied on split second timing to avoid it becoming an uncontrollable weapon whilst in flight.

However, having completed 4,329nm our overall conclusion is that we are thrilled that we had chosen a Nordhavn 41. She is a 'little ship' capable of weathering tough conditions. Cruising at 7-8kts with comparatively frugal fuel consumption(7kts at 2,000 rpm – 11lts/hr) is what she was designed for. She is also comfortable. It has been a very steep learning curve but we have grown in confidence while learning to operate this very technical machine. So to the Sail v Motor observations. Firstly, with idyllic conditions and preferably wind abaft the beam, motor will never

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replicate the thrill of sail and indeed, seldom the speed through the water, limited to around 8kts under power. Conversely, on the wind, motor does have some distinct advantages, of course no need to tack! Motion under motor upwind is quite acceptable with waves up to 1.5m in short seas and significantly higher in the long rolling Atlantic seas. Stabilizers do work! In terms of close quarter manoeuvring, perhaps into a marina berth, there is little difference between our Oyster45 and this boat. However spinning on the spot, with deft use of twin engines and tweaking the bow thruster can be a bonus, particularly in cross winds. Lastly, when the weather is gloomy, perhaps raining and gusty, shutting the doors and engaging the 24" props, is perhaps preferable to hoisting and trimming the sails given that we are often just a couple aboard!

Casalamy in La Maddalena
(painting Susanna MacInnes)