

To Scandinavia for the 2025 Tall Ships Race

By Peter Galloway

My sailing trip began with meeting my crewmates at Heathrow airport. From here we flew to Oslo, where there was a coach waiting to take us to the coast. This was the first delivery leg of the Tall Ships Race and the plan was to sail the Rona II from Norway to Sweden, then to Denmark, and then through the Kiel Canal ultimately to finish in the Netherlands. When we arrived at Larvik we explored the town, which was exciting as it was my first time in Norway. We also met the previous crew, who had just sailed from Aberdeen in the final race leg. I managed to catch up with someone I had sailed with before on Rona II! He reported that Rona II was in a challenging state, with several lines snapped and one fair-lead having been completely torn off. When I arrived at the boat she was being thrown against the wall by a heavy swell, due to the stormy conditions. When we boarded, the skipper took the decision for us to move out of the harbour to a safer and more comfortable anchorage for the night.

The next day we crossed the Skagerrak to Sweden, the conditions were severe all day, with wind speeds reaching 8 on the Beaufort scale. Unfortunately, I was incapacitated by sea-sickness. From there, we sailed south to Gothenburg and then crossed to Denmark, involving a night-sail which was really fun though tiring. We enjoyed exploring both the city and the small Danish villages that we visited, with lots of sailing amongst islands in between. After seven days of sailing we arrived at the eastern entrance of the Kiel Canal. We celebrated the journey so far, and I fully realised how much of a bond I had formed with the rest of the crew. We then sailed continually for well over 200 miles through the Canal, along the north coast of Germany and the Netherlands and ultimately into IJmuiden. This took several days, and we routinely sailed overnight. This was quite a tough passage but I learnt to cope with it well by sleeping when I could and enjoying the small things as we sailed, such as cocoa, good conversations and sleep. After arriving IJmuiden, we took a brief break before heading to Amsterdam where we enjoyed an evening of shore-leave. It was sad to leave the crew the next day, as we were all so close by that point.

This was probably the most exciting sail I have ever done. Having always wanted to sail in Scandinavia, I was very pleased to have done so in three Scandinavian countries. The intense, long passages throughout taught me much about endurance in sailing and my skills were developed further during the voyage. I was even recommended to undergo watch-leader training by the end! Overall, the trip was thrilling, developmental and fun, and it has left me with several new friends, as I have stayed in touch with many of my crewmates!

Kind regards,

Peter

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