

RCC Cadet Cruise

June 2017

Friday 9th June saw the arrival of seven cadets and potential cadets in Tallinn, Estonia 59°43.7' N, 24°75.3' E for the start of the RCC Cadet Cruise 2017 with Noel Marshall Funding support. We had chartered two boats – one Aurelia, a Hanse 531 was chartered from Tallinn, Estonia and the other, a 46ft Dufour, Minea, from Dalsbruk, Finland. This account is from Yacht Aurelia with the skipper Will Whatley and crew: Katie Schuster, Mai Cherissa Ringrose, Rozzy Waite, Nick Williams, Will Eaton, and Izzie Harrison-Hall.

Whilst skipper Will checked that everything was in order with our *enormous* Hanse 531, Aurelia; the girls provisioned up on the basis we may not see another shop for most of the week. Having investigated all the various cabins and with lockers now full to the gunwales with enough food and drink to feed the 5,000 (or certainly seven hungry cadets) we got ready for a week exploring new territories.

Having been assured by the Charter company that the partially deflated and scuffed dinghy was definitely brand new(!), and not to worry that the life raft was 5 years expired, we decided to hold out for further safety supplies the following morning and went ashore to explore the beautiful old town of Tallinn and spent a lovely summers evening wandering around the old cobbled streets and trying the local cuisine.

We woke to the early morning sounds of Tallinn and as soon as we had taken receipt of sufficient life jackets for all the crew, and some in-date flares (just in case), we set sail with 6 knots of wind and glorious sunshine out into Tallinn Bay.



*Crew
leaving
Tallinn
Harbour
(from L to R
– Katie,
Mai, Will W,
Nick, Will E
and Rozzy)*

For our first sail we had a lovely passage 20 miles West getting used to Aurelia and testing out the rigging as we sailed to the tiny harbour of Lohusalu, 59°24.2'N; 24°12.6'E. Having navigated through the rocks, we carefully moored up alongside the large stone quay with a couple of local yachts. We soon discovered that we were lucky enough to have arrived on their weekly dancing night – it was quite the place to be, and after cooking a joint of Roast Pork and all the trimmings, washed down with several G&T's we all thoroughly enjoyed joining in with the traditional Estonian dance, although our dancing was perhaps not quite up to the local standards!



Aurelia moored up to the quay in Lohusalu

An absolute dead calm faced us the next morning but we were keen to press on across the waters to Finland and meet the other Cadet yacht. We motored out of Lohusalu and set a course for the Eastern harbour in Hanko, Finland 59°49.2'N, 22°58.3'E. Our passage plan was relatively straightforward across the Gulf of Finland with the biggest obstacle being the regular ferries crossing the Gulf. With very limited wind we took it in turns to practice our reefing techniques, wishfully hoping for a breeze. Our eager time-filler hastily paid off when we discovered Aurelia was not rigged properly to enable reefing so were able to spend time re-rigging her in a more suitable manner, and were mighty glad we were not doing it whilst pitching in rough seas with the sail under pressure!

Flat calm sailing across the Gulf of Finland



By afternoon the wind had freshened from the North East and we were able to sail at a steady six knots for Finland at last! A couple of hours of solid rain put all our oilies to good use, and the heavy fog which accompanied it, enabled us to test out the radar.

With Finland finally in site, the fog cleared just enough for us to navigate through the minefield of rocks into the guest harbour at East Hanko, to join the Minea, who had sailed across from Dalsbruck that morning and were ready to take our lines! Aboard Minea they had Ben Warnick as skipper, and a crew consisting Mike Skidmore, Robbie Tidbury, Tom Chivers and Tom Bott. We moored up alongside them, and started discussing ideas for the rest of the week.

Monday brought us lots more heavy rain and very thick fog – so the prospect of navigating through the rocky passage out of East Hanko was rather unappealing. We held off initially, in the hope it would clear and went to see what Hanko had to offer (very little it would seem). We fuelled up whilst we had the chance, and topped up our water supplies to pass the time. By just after lunch, the fog had cleared enough for us to wend our way back out of the rocky entrance, both Aurelia and Minea set sail with fairwinds for Lappohja 59°09.2'N 23°24.1'E and even enjoyed a little race to get there! (Aurelia won...)



Photo of the two cadet yachts – Aurelia and Minea racing

We had spotted what looked to be a beautiful anchorage on the chart, 20 miles north of Hanko. However having been assured we had 50m of chain we tried to anchor in 13m onto a muddy bottom, only to discover the chain ran out rather abruptly at 15m... having checked incredulously to see if the chain had just jammed, we discovered that was truly the end and thanked our lucky stars that it was properly shackled on!

The windlass decided this was the perfect time to jam, and after Nick and Will had a good old wrestle with the chain we mercifully recovered the anchor. Feeling slightly disheartened we found an alternative mooring spot for both yachts about a mile further West.



Will Eaton and Nick pulling up the anchor

Will braved the Baltic for a swim (he didn't stay in long!) and we joined forces with Minea for a mammoth card game session in the cockpit – sadly (and to our shame) no copy of the Song Book was to hand and we made a note to bring one next time. Sensible crew might have gone to bed when it

got dark, but since it didn't really get dark at those latitudes, and we were having such a good time all together, the card games went on rather longer into the night than planned!

After relatively little sleep and a slightly slower morning, the two slightly jaded crews set sail for Kasnäs (59°55'.3N 22°24'.6E) and found the perfect hangover cure with a fast and windy sail through some very narrow passages which certainly woke everyone up tested our navigation techniques. We also had further reefing practice as we stormed along at over 10 knots and needed to shorten sail! Another day, another race to port – this time the yachts each took a slightly different route. One casualty en-route – a prized Mount Gay Rum baseball cap sadly blew off too close to the rocks to risk a man-overboard drill in the freshening Force 5/6 wind.

Arriving into Kasnäs and with the windlass jammed we moored up alongside the quay and were met by a very friendly harbour master. Kasnäs is a large marina well protected from all winds and typical of Finland, has a brand new sauna that overlooks the harbour so you can sit in the heat within and admire the view of your yacht!

Sadly after our night in Kasnäs, the two yachts had to part company - Minea had to be returned to Dalsbruk so couldn't come any further East with us, and we were rather envious as they headed off for the Åland Islands. Aurelia set sail early to make the most of the favourable Westerly wind, and enjoyed a gentle broad reach in the gorgeous sunshine and enjoyed the spectacular scenery as we continued our journey East to Jussarö (59°49'.8N 23°34'.3E, an old iron mining island within the Ekenäs National Park), an old quarry island within the Ekenäs Archipelago National Park which is now virtually uninhabited and open to the public.



Aurelia moored up in Jussarö

Arriving in Jussarö we used transits to guide us into the little pool and found a single pontoon with just two other vessels for company. Having carefully moored bow to the pontoon with the sternline onto a buoy (a new technique for many of us) we clambered over the bow and went ashore to explore the island. From the top of the Lotssuberget tower, we couldn't see a single habitation in any direction and decided we had found paradise... We were blown away with the beauty of Jussarö and the surrounding vista. We continued exploring the island and headed back on board where we were enjoying a pre—prandial drink in the cockpit when a friendly Dutchman from the neighbouring yacht came aboard to join us and chat about the local area, and gave us some recommendations for our final stop on the route to Helsinki.



*Panoramic views
from Jussarö*

Skipper's birthday today! As if in celebration for Will's birthday, the weather kept getting better and with a boat full of balloons and a breakfast of birthday pancakes we set sail. With a fairly light breeze we had full canvas up and sailed along comfortably at 3.5 knots, navigating through yet more narrow rocky passages between the islands. We were having such a beautiful sail that we decided to keep going past the Dutchman's recommendation, Barösund, so we continued up an inlet which had been recommended by the charter company as a good place to explore, it was Älgsjö, Elisaari.

We motored up the creek cautiously as the chart and pilot guide gave different depths and the charter company hadn't been able to confirm exactly how much Auralia drew beneath the waterline (apparently there were a number of different models) so we took it very gently and kept to the middle of the channel. As we pioneered up the inlet it was so narrow in areas that we wouldn't have been able to turn around if we'd met another boat! After about an hour of nervous and gentle progress under engine, the inlet opened up into a snug pool, it was surrounded by steep rock on one side with a wooden walkway attached to it and several other yachts moored up bow-to with the stern on a buoy. Due to our size, for security we moored bow-to and our stern on several buoys! We went ashore to explore and of course nowhere in Finland was complete without a sauna, just a 5 minute walk away from the mooring was a small log cabin in a field with a wood-burning sauna steaming away.



Aurelia moored up in Älgsjö, Elisaari

Onto our last day, we were headed for our final destination, Helsinki. Will and Izzie motored gently down river first thing, leaving the rest of the crew asleep, and headed out of the creek. We had one of the best days sailing yet, absolutely creaming along through the rocky passages, in glorious sunshine. By the late afternoon we were easily reaching 9 knots so as we entered the mouth of Helsinki we shortened sail as the waters got busier. Reluctantly we furled the sails for the last time and as we motored to our mooring we reflected on what had been an amazing week in a very new sailing environment. For many of the crew most sailing had been along the English South Coast, and so the island-hopping nature of the Finnish Gulf made a fascinating insight into Baltic Cruising.

We would like to thank the Marshall Fund for its very generous support of the Cadet Cruise. It is an amazing opportunity for both newer sailors and prospective members to gain experience and confidence at sea.



Aurelia's last passage – motoring down-river to sail on to Helsinki