

SOM 18: Cape Hoorn

More or less three weeks after leaving to Germany Anke is back again in Ushuaia. At home things turned out better so she could come back with a good feeling. The next days are filled up with the normal activities before leaving for a longer trip. Sorting out things, finding out where to buy fresh vegetables and meat – vacuumpacked for longer lasting – and so on... Finally we fill the tanks with water and gasoil plus 12 jerry cans with 240 litres more gasoil and wait for favorable winds. Luckily we don't have to wait long for a stable weather situation with weak to favorable winds from east. Ideal conditions to go to the Hoorn.

On our leaving day we rush downtown the last time: buying fresh vegies (Anke), not much at the moment – beer in cans (Martin) which is better to stow away. Today of all days the beer seller is closed so he has to raid the supermarkets fridge with the last few



cans. Eventually we meet on the boat at half past one. Shortly after one the officials of the *prefectura* arrives and gives us the *zarpe* (clearing) full of drive. Since ever we noticed the south american officials preference for bold signatures. He impresses us with a signature which covers a full quarter of a A4-paper. Martin mentioned that he himself has to practice more to reach equal ability which amused him. Yes his should be a bosses signature but still he is far from being perfect.

After a few hours of smooth sailing we are reaching Puerto Williams and raft up in the world's southernmost yachtclub. The chilean navy had run aground an old provisioning ship, the CONTRAMAESTRE MICALVI, and turned this artificial wreck to serve as a yachtclubs pontoon. It's a fully save place in a charming landscape like in the european alpes but with visiting Seagulls, wistling Oyster Catchers and singing Ibisses. Less nice is the crush. There are so much yachts that we have to raft up with five other yachts. After a few minutes the official five-heads-delegation shows up to give us the clearance: Coast Guard, Customs, Police for Foreign Affairs, Health Service and Agriculture Ministry. Our cabin is packed full. Suprisingly the clearance into Chile only takes 10 minutes and everything is done.

The next day we let pass by. Not a mistake as we can notice later. Rafting up means that when one boat wants to leave all the other outer boats have to leave and raft up again. In the second raft-ballet this morning our engine refuses to start. Quickly we move JUST DO IT with ropes. In peace we try again and the engine starts. 5 minutes later it stops again. Hmh. First think. There is an old wisdom: a diesel engine runs always as long as it gets air and gas. Think again an have a look. Eventually Martin discovers the number-one reason by chance: yesterday we filled up the day tank for the heater and for that reason switched the valve



from the engine to the day tank. Another old wisdom: without food no good mood. Hesitating..... good that nobody knows. Reason number two we eliminate with a big bang: we are ripping out the old starter installing the new one. And again the engine starts and runs like it should. So Anke didn't stay the drama at the airport at Hannover for nothing (bomb alarm, temporarily arresting, missed flight ...). In the evening the bar in the MICALVI is open and we celebrate the days successes in the venerable rooms of the „illustrious and southernmost yacht club of the world“ with the chilean classic *Pisco Sour*. It's a lemon based Longdrink. Because of it's high acidity it is a really a long drink which you only can drink by tiny sips.

On the next day after the usual leaving-ballet we are heading east along the Beagle Channel. Behind us the snow covered summits, which raise west of Ushuaia, vanishing out of our sight. Not a long time later we make a right and soon reach the small bay of Puerto Toro. Here they have a small old jetty to which we moore. Tying up means some little climbings because the jetty really is not in it's best shape. The port captain or the policeman of the village or whoever gives us a warm welcome and with him a pack of dogs. They are happy about new things going on and – of course more - about Anke's treats. Shortly later Monique and Michel are showing up with their LA FLÂNEUSE and raft up to us. According to Martin's prejudice which he carries around since „Asterix at the Belgians“ Monique already had prepared dinner to which we are invited soon.



Next morning sad dogs eyes are watching our departure. We are welcomed by a sea like a mirror, absolutely smooth, lefthand and righthand lying a mountainous landscape formed by several islands, in gently green colours: meadows and low woods. In the background we see high peaks with snow fields and clouds which seem to hold themselves at the tops. After passing Isla Lennox on the western side we find some wind and so we have a three hours sailing crossing Bahía Nassau, a part of water which opens east to the Atlantic Ocean. Gradually we close up to LA FLÂNEUSE who has started earlier.

North of the Isla Horn is a small group of Islands with Isla Wollaston as the biggest island. We plan to spend the night in the sheltered waters of this archipelago. After a short discussion we decide to use the shortcut Canal Bravo. According to our sailing permit – you need a permit called *zarpe* for each sailing you will do in Chilean waters - this *canal* ist forbidden for us. But in all other *zarpes* of other yachts it is allowed. So we think that this is an error and ignore our *zarpe*. Finally nobody takes care about this. Entering Canal Bravo we are moving in more or less sheltered waters again. Isla Wollaston gives an impression of rough, scratched and bizarr wilderness in opposite to most of the gentle shaped islands in its neighbourhood. The peaks rise to more than 1.600 feet altitude and accompany our way to the right. We turn the course more to the west and with wind from the stern we start heading to Puerto Maxwell, settled in between four small islands, perfectly sheltered. It is a pity, but there is only little place left, two other yachts which rounded the famous cape today have arrived before. We're turning some time to find a pleasant and safe anchorage. Eventually Scott and Mary of EGRET call us to raft up to them. This ist the first time we are anchoring in a raft. That means, we set our anchor properly and then we let us drift back und tie both yachts together. To the shore our raft is tied with shorelines from EGRET. We are surrounded by wooded slopes and in front of us the evening sun treat us with a very golden colour to the characteristic silhouette of Isla Wollaston.

Next morning Mary is awake at 5 o'clock to give us a hand with our lines und help us leaving. But – nobody thought about this before – the skipper (Martin) is sitting in the bathrrom thowing up the headache pills he took some minutes before. Migraine. Short delay. Then he can say okay and Mary hands over our lines. Both yachts swing to another side - very nice - and we go to lift our anchor. We are lucky that we don't have to free the chain or the anchor from kelp. We are leaving Puerto Maxwell using the southern passage. Behind this short outlet we find the unlimited view to the Southern Ocean and Isla Hall. The rising sun just moves behind the islands smouthly rounded top and enlights the cloud cap above. This phenomenon makes a deep impression on us. This cloud cap hooves clearly over the top, but it does not move, and more than this, all the islands around are fitted out with their own personal caps for each top or peak too. After looking to the actual weather data and a look around where we register a light wind from northeast, we decide to pass Isla Hall on the western side and to round Cape Horn from west to east. LA FLÂNEUSE is passing Isla Hall on the eastern side but our courses are heading to the same point close to the Cape. The wheather stays stable and with a friendly wind we can go a course of more or less 150° to meet at Islote Carvajal, a small rock close to the Horn. We can take some fotos as a proof that we navigate around this famous rock.



Cape Horn we found totally different to that we knew from photos and travel reports. It is not at all a simple rock. It is a gentle rounded island with steep cliffs falling down to the sea. And this island is green. Green because of the mosses, green because of the grass and green because of all the tiny little corners where there are little trees resisting the storms and the cold. And just now it is shiny green due to the sun which enlightens everything. And like all the surrounding islands the Cape has put on a foggy cap today. We hurry to shoot the photos, and this has its real reason, some moments later a wall of clouds coming from southeast reaches our position, hides the Horn away and envelops us with humid, cold and somehow prickling fog. Fortunately this happens only for some moments, then the mists rise and we have a good view to Punta Espolon, the south east part of this island, so we can head to it. There stands the famous lighthouse where the lighthouse man lives for one year with his family, the small chapel and the memorial which is dedicated to all sailors who found their wet death in this area.

The easterly wind is not very strong, but the only bay at Cape Horn, where you can go ashore with a dinghy is open to the east. Strong swell is running into this bay. So we have to decide not to visit Cape Horn island. We change the course to the north to hide away in better sheltered waters. Well, after we have finished the main event Martin's migraine comes back again and when the wind is increasing – in clear opposition to the forecast – and creates a short, steep sea he feels seasick. More or less. His blood pressure starts falling into the cellar and short time later he first hangs over the railing and then

"in the ropes" (a German phrase). Unfortunately we have to point to the wind which gives some pitchers of seawater the way into the boat through the starboard vent. Once again our beds are wet. Anke gives some angry protest and we are sure you could hear it from here to Germany. That means actually we have no dry bed to use. So Martin takes the cushions of the sofa and makes a kind of a nest on the floor, where he spends the next hours trembling of cold. Anke meanwhile has to sail alone and to do all the work which is needed. Hopefully this makes it easier for her to forget the frustration. Somewhere, a few hours later, Martin feels better and struggles up himself into the cockpit. He has to force Anke with some learned words to make a break now and to go into the ship to find some time to relax. It is important to use your energy economically. You never know what kind of challenge will come next.



Though the way to the Hoorn was really pleasant, Cape Horn is not presented to you as a gift. Of course the northwesterly wind is blowing as unfortunately as possible and is entering Paso Gorree which is located between Isla Navarino and Isla Lennox. A real funnel like you will find in a school book. Every sailing teacher would be pleased by this perfect example. We not, of course. The wind temporarily is rising up to 30 knots – by the way we might mention that we had a weather forecast of about 10 knots – and creates a current which is contrary too, of course. The first tack is really the best thing to make oneself depressive. So we are starting the engine and struggle in a short steep sea, just the sea which is the worst for our Autoprop propeller. For some time we have a progress of famous 2 knots over ground...

Hours later we reach Puerto Toro. LA FLÂNEUSE reports via VHF-radio that the place is absolutely peacefully. They are tied to the old jetty and we should come alongside. Sounds good. So we run the boat round the corner and continue to the jetty.

„What the hell are they doing? I thought we should come alongside?“

Anke noticed perplexed that LA FLÂNEUSE moves off from the jetty and turns.

„Perhaps they want us to go to the inner position?“

„But why such circumstances?“

„Perhaps because our fenders are bigger?“

„But wait – they don't move anymore!“



„Do they stuck?“

„Well, I think they stuck, indeed!“

We move closer and soon you can see LA FLÂNEUSE'S engine running with full power but nothing happens. Michel makes gestures not to come too close but we have less draught and this means we have more space to manoeuvre. So we go as near as possible to LA FLÂNEUSE. Michel comes with his dinghy and hands over a strong line, while we turn. Heading off from the shallow waters we can pull better in the right direction and have more possibilities to steer. It needs a short while and we have some thrilling moments but eventually LA FLÂNEUSE is free and

back in deep water. We here stones falling down from our hearts. Michel and Monique now prefer to anchor. And expecting uncomfortable weather we do the same. So JUST DO IT and LA FLÂNEUSE are tied together and this raft we fix with some stern lines to the jetty. And could it be different? Monique just has prepared a meal. The joined meal then gets a short interruption. The harbour master has got the order of the *Prefectura Naval* in Puerto Williams to examine engine and bilge of LA FLÂNEUSE. Obviously they have listened to the misfortune by radio. And here the *Prefectura* is very careful and orientated to high safety standards. Finally they are not pleased by the information and they announce the visit of a scuba diver for the next morning. He should control the hull for damages! After dinner we let run the champagne, the only suitable drink to this day. And Stan Stainless, the restless reporter asks the unavoidable question:

„What did you feel rounding Cape Horn?“

Monique: „I had to remember all the sailors who lost their lives here at Cape Horn. And if you see how the Cape presents itself today this really gives a strong touch to my feelings.“

Anke: „I have thought of my old grandfather who has rounded Cape Horn several times as a Captain aboard one of these old square-rigged sailing ships, but he never would have been so close to it than we were today. I am sure he saw Cape Horn from far distance and he was happy and glad when he had rounded it. The beauty of the Cape was hidden to him for sure.“

Michel: „I had to think about that it was right to make the decision and to come to this place. I mean to make this kind of journey from Europe to this special point here. Not only because of the Hoorn but because of all the impressions and experiences we got on the way.“



Martin: „How a reporter always can ask this silly question? I have thought it is green. It is so green. On all photographs and pictures and in lots of travel reports the Cape and the Hoorn-island is described as an odd grey rock or as a foggy grey spot at the horizon. In reality it is a gentle rounded little hill with some steep falling cliffs. And it is green. No naked rock, a vivid, a living island.“

Late in the night when we left LA FLÂNEUSE we get the final wage of all our efforts: just in the south of us we are surprised bay McNaught, the comet which is shining from the cloudless sky in enormous beauty and size. Nobody of us had ever seen such a big, beautiful comet before. A bright shining head with an endless tail which covers nearly a fifth of the skies surface.

Meanwhile we are back in Ushuaia to store gasoil and provisions for the last time. Then we will start for the north, heading to warmer areas.

Kisses und hugs to all of you
Martin und Anke
from Ushuaia, 27.01.2007

Comments to the photographs in their order:

The southernmost yacht club in Puerto Williams – This area is not free of risks – evening idyll: Isla Wollaston, rainbow and water like a mirror – JUST DO IT rounding the Cape Hoorn – Anke and the Cape, in the background Islote Carjaval – Martin and the Cape (have a look to the changing wheather in this three fotos) – LA FLÂNEUSE passing the memorial dedicated to the Cape Hoorriers – Our course from Puerto Maxwell to Cape Hoorn