

SOM 19:
In the fjords of wild Patagonia

Rain, hail, fog, mists, strong gusts, wild animals and not even one soul. Some three month we struggled through the canyons, fjords and channels of wild Patagonia. Sun, warmth, dryness and the existence of other human beings only were left as weak imaginations. Finally reaching the bay of Anna Pink we found a change to more pleasant conditions. Of course our travel was not an uninterrupted struggle. There was plenty of time to go through new experiences or to explore. So much to tell that we can not do this in a short SOM. It was a great pity that bad weather often forced us to stay at places we had preferred to leave. And otherwise the running time forced us to continue and leave places we would like to stay. Not to forget the wet cold climate which forced us to a daily struggle against the increasing mould. This all together could attack our nerves heavily – so it was in some moments a nerve-wrecking time. But now we have reached Valdivia and enjoy hot showers, sun and the colours of the beginning autumn.



But let's tell step by step: We had an unexpected break in Ushuaia and when we sailed to Puerto Williams to get the unavoidable permission to sail in Chilean waters heading north, our progress was stopped soon. One week we had to wait for good weather to pass through the Beagle channel. This cools down each kind of travel fever. We spent the time hiking and visiting the famous and glamorous MICALVI bar regularly, to sit there with other sailors and to drink our favorite *Pisco Sour*. One very special day we got white wine with Antarctic ice which was brought by our friends from SANTA MARIA

AUSTRALIS. Then suddenly we had a day for traveling, but only one, and again we stuck for five days in Caleta Olla. One try to continue, done in high spirits, was stopped soon after rounding the first corner and remorseful we returned to the well sheltered *caleta*. This was not so hard to us because there were waiting Michel and Monique, Belgians, and this means like everybody knows who had read the comics of Asterix, that they like good and rich meals. An affection we often practiced together. The next weather window we both used to pass some glaciers and to enter Seno Pia, a fjord, in which three glaciers are pushing their ice masses. *Claro*, we had to use the opportunity and so we sailed directly to the end of the eastern arm to pass through lots of drifting ice until we reached the closed icefield in front of the glacier. From time to time we heard loud thunder and than some blocks of ice were crashing down to the icefield. We brought our dinghi into the water and started a little fotografic session. First we thought we have to use strong engine power to navigate in this ice field but the reality is more friendly to the adventurous sailor. The drifting icefield is rotating. Watch the rotation, enter at the right place and the ice will take your boat. Clockwise we were circling around in front of the glacier until we were pushed out. Using the engine you can influence how close you go to the vertical walls of the glacier. Easy to do just with the smallest engine. But most fun we had rowing with the dinghi in the ice field. May be you will think I am telling fairy tales, but with our foldable plastic bath tube we could pass through thickest ice fields with biggest blocks of ice, phantastic! And of course we liked it to make new discoveries. So we found the hopefully only one non charted rock hidden close under the surface of the milky green icy water where it is waiting for innocent yachts. The noise of the



discovering sounded not really fine. So, shit happens, but our boat meanwhile seems to be used to that. It made some little jumps and hops and then we were free again. But few minutes later we got satisfaction of an other kind for that little shock. Friendly fishermen we found in Caleta Beaulieu nearby and they presented us a big *Congrio*, a real tasty fish. We gave them some wine for the evening party. The fish we cooked together with Monique and Michel because such a *Congrio* is too big for two persons, believe me.

It was a big pity but Seno Pia was the place where we had to leave our friends. One of the countless sad moments of the way of longtime-travelling. The weather saw our sadness and decided to turn our views to other aspects of sailing. Not far from the next well sheltered *caleta* it shows us our limits and forced us to turn the bow of JUST DO IT backwards. 10 miles we had to go in the wrong direction. Angryness and frustration, but otherwise we discovered Caleta Alakush, a jewel, which otherwise had been kept hidden. Next day we could continue but we really got a nice strike on the cap (like we say in a German phrase). The first time that a real strong *racha* met us in free waters. Within seconds the

wind increased to storm force, the current running against the wind caused a sudden rough and choppy sea. No chance for some progress. We tried to keep our position going with the wind from the side because we knew a *racha* will end soon. So it did and we hurried to enter the next *caleta*. Here fate presented us with the visit of some other fishermen. Two tetrapacks of wine were going to them and six *Centollas* (king crabs) and a lot of sea urchin which they at once prepared because we had no imagination how to make this. So it works: Take a big knife and cut the sea urchin with some little hits in two equal parts. Make it like you would open an egg. Then you pull out the yellowish roe. Only this is eatable. Drop some oil and lemon juice on the roe, taste it. There is no way to get a more



freshly prepared meal. Next day the weather had changed totally. Sunshine, calm conditions. We had a wonderful sailing passing Canal Ballenero. A world like a labyrinth made of hundreds of little islands and tiny rocks separating us from the open Pacific Ocean. The sunshine made us grabbing this chance and soon we started a long lasting nice hot shower in the cockpit. Next day, different day. Grey sky. We only stepped round the corner to enter nearby Caleta Brecknock which is a deep cut in the high, round shaped rocky hills. Here we met Bette and Bob who are travelling the channels from north to south. They were the last people we met for some weeks. Now times far from all human souls had started. After some unavoidable days of relaxing – too much wind from the wrong direction – we continued into Canal Cockburn. Here we could sail and - using a small passage, the Canal Acwalisnan - we entered the Strait of Magellan.

It shows a phantastic scenerie of mountains on both sides of the waters with lots of changing, dramatic views, moving clouds, spots of blue sky, hail, mists and showers, winds and currents. This odd strait is not really long but let's say it short, she isn't an easy fellow and obviously she didn't like us. Eleven days we needed to pass her. Too much wind, too much currents, always from the west, day by day. We struggled to hop some *caletas* to the west, if it was possible. Then we had to stop and wait again. The forced breaks we used for hikes in the surrounding rocks, not always an easy enterprise. First you have to cross a more or less thick wood. No high growing trees but thick, very thick – and wet. We had to push our bodys through thorns, shrubs, bushes. The ground sometimes is hanging in the second floor – not visible for the poor hiking guy. Suddenly you will have a little break through with one of your legs. I once had a fast fall from the second to the first



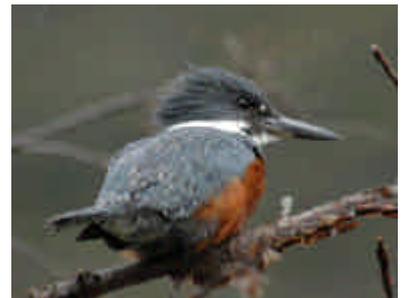
floor and happily found there a good ground, otherwise I would have found myself back on the beach where I started. The wood mostly is followed by swampy area, where you continue with strenuous steps, making strange wet noises and sometimes in danger losing one of your shoes. Glad you will be if you reach pure rocks. There finally you can proceed easily. And here you will find the best views to your anchorage and the surroundings, the views worth the effort and all the struggles before.



But somethen we were successful and leaved the Strait of Magellan. A last racha treating us with some hail and then we could turn into Canal Smith where we could set sails! Such a quiet sailing, heading on without the noise of the engine. That this was possible, we could not believe. The shape of the mountains has changed, they are looking like mountains of kefir. From now on we had a more or less regular progress but there was still a remaining question: is our remaining fuel sufficient or not? Each day with wind on the nose and current against us the question was becoming more urgent. Finally we decided to make the detour to Puerto Natales to

stock up gasoil. To go to this nice town we needed some steps more, of course, but with each daytrip the nature satisfied us for all the difficulties. One day we had a visit from dolphins, giving us a great welcome and hallo when we entered their little bay, next day we met parrots or hummingbirds or some of all the other birds. The hummingbirds liked to make an inspection of the Chilean courtesy flag which we flew under the starboard spreader. The red colour seemed to attract them. Outside of the *caletas* we could see southamerican seabears and sealions, lots of albatrosses, petrels and rarely – but we met them – Humpback Whales.

These *caletas* are a very good invention. There are existing much more than our nautical guide could describe. You drop your anchor, and with the help of one or two shorelines you stabilize the stern of the boat against the main direction of the blowing or expected wind. The closer you go to the shore the better is the shelter. Some of them are phantastic: outside the *caleta* there can howl a storm, inside you may find a pleasant air or sometimes absolut calm. So you will understand that sometimes we left a sheltered place, pointed with the nose round the next corner, and returned as quick as we could because in our tiny little sheltered bay we didn't feel the bad conditions outside.

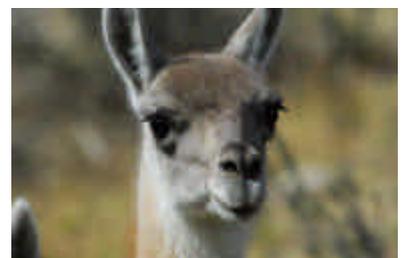


In Puerto Natales we first bought some gallons of fuel, *claro*, than we stocked up with fresh vegetables and after some time of thinking about the pros and cons we decided in spite of the good wheather forecast (also good for continuing with good progress) to make a little excursion to Torres del Paine national park. There we spent three days and made some hikes in this partly lovely, partly spectacular and bizarr mountains. The way up to the *Torres* was a nice hike though finally we had to climb hard, but the way down created some problems to my knees. Next day I was really handicaped and I had to give up the effort to hike to the Grey glacier. But we reached a viewing point where we



had a view to the whole dimensions of the glacier and – imprising big icebirgs drifting over the glaciers lagoon. Anke was brave and continued her hike but finally she had to return before the glacier to avoid the evenings darkness.

Well, we know, it sounds unbelievable that we had seen parrots and hummingbirds in this cold southern land, but I can add rheas, flamingos and last but not least guanacos, but the letter are no surprise, aren't they?



After leaving Puerto Natales we met the next people when we arrived in the 250 souls settlement of Puerto Edén. Here we had to stock up fuel again, out of an old benched and rusty drum. But the stuff was of suprising good quality. Maria, the wife of Don José, the master of the fuel, runs a little restaurant on request and, could there be any question, we requested and found a service like at moms stove. And the next decision appeared soon. Should we continue or should we use the calm conditions to visit another glacier? It was so nice in Seno Pia, so we made a 20 miles detour following the so-called Seno Iceberg. And if we had known that we could not continue the next day (we had a real storm in the main channel) we would have had spent the night close to the little forest station near the glacier, enjoying hot showers and a dinner together with the forest men. So we only took the time for a short visit and promptly they served us a late lunch. Not far north the notorious Golfo de Penas was waiting. We should cross it only under good conditions. So we entered Caleta Ideal, a name which is definitely not correct, better to call it Caleta Unideal, waiting for southerly winds. We were joined by the french yacht ANKA. And – just the first night became a night of fierce struggle. Pitch black like in hell (without the hellfire, of course), heavy rain, strong wind from north, our anchor was starting to drag. There was no choice, we had to leave the anchorage. Easy to say it was difficult to do



so. JUST DO IT started drifting with still 20 m of chain out. Then everything happened quickly, hectically and chaotically. No sight at all. Everywhere rocks hidden in the darkness (which seems to be logic in a bay which is called sheltered all around, hahaha). The anchor still was dragging on the ground. Our dinghi submerged during a wild turn – arrg: rocks! Of course it preferred the position under the stern and close to the propeller. For heavens sake, the fixing line of the dinghi - the propeller! But somehow things turned out well. Tacking right, tacking left. There, suddenly, one or two meter in front of the bow, we saw ANKA, and too late: we hit her and our solid bow platform started to clear her deck from midship to stern. Sudden wake-up-call for their crew. According to our call they switched on all lights which made orientation more easy. Then we dropped the anchor in a kind of emergency manouvre, closely passing ANKA again, but we had to lift our dinghi to avoid more problems and damage. After we got it aboard we could start a new try to drop the anchor in a better position. The beginning grey light of dawn was a big help. Then in the late morning we came together with the crew of ANKA to make



all the necessary paperwork for the insurance company. Michel, the owner is a practic french man, the kind with this friendly relaxed attitude to some benches and scratches on a car, which makes it easy.

Golfo de Penas we crossed with friendly weather and we recognized that it divides two wheather sides. We were heading to the sun. You remember this whitish-yellowish round thing in the sky which can spent warmth? From now on our progress was becoming

more relaxed, faster, free of stress and richer on sunshine mile by mile. When we finally left the Patagonian cannels and started to this little hop to visit the island of Chiloé we had an encounter with Blue Whales for the first time. A small group of three. Later we met two more. We were so close to one of them that we had to reduce our speed to avoid touching it. So close to this animals you recognize their gigantic size, and the highs of their blow. In Chiloé we learned to know a local specialty: lots of ancient races of potatoes. Black, purple, red and brown ones, round, egg shaped, sausage shaped. And all well tasting. Some bags of them we got as a present. In Europe it would be forbidden to sell them according to the food



regulations and laws. What a crazy world. Then really unexpected Rasmus, this odd god of wheather (better named „Old Windbag“ in my opinion) stops our travel for six days sending stormy wheather. Never again I will sacrifice him a single drop of sherry or some other spirits. Always thirsty for alcoholics and no help for poor sailors – no my pal, this time has run out. It was a pity, but the time had slipped away so we cancelled the idea to go to Puerto Montt and we sailed to Valdivia directly. These means to pass this little tiny water called Canal Chacao, which seperates Chiloé from the mainland. Tiny means strong tidal currents. Though we entered this channel early one hour before high tide but the ebbtide was already running and sucked us into the channel spitting us out to the Pacific. We reached a speed up to 12 knots over ground. 6,5 kn are our usual travel speed. In the outlet the Pacific gave us a fresh hello, that meant a really fresh sea to avoid some misunderstanding with its name. Short, high, breaking waves. If we compare our trip with ANKAS, which was sailing parallel we made the more easy trip – they took over some 20 waves which flooded the whole hull and let the yacht looking like a submarine. Only one breaking wave found the way in our cockpit and well aimed it washed my glasses over board. After one hour of real hard chop we had passed the worst part and could change our course to the north for Valdivia. We reached this place one and a half day later, healthy and happy and now we enjoy the luxuries of civilized life (hot shower, fresh meals, chocolate ...) as far as the necessary works allow.



Well, how we will continue is still a riddle to us. We will see in the next days.

And second well, this part of the travel was an extremely rich time. Adventures and experiences. So we could tell much more. But for a short report it is too much. Well, if you like you have to wait some weeks, but than hopefully you can see more fotos of the Patagonian world.

For now we are ending sending you bezos y abrazos, hugs and kisses

Martin und Anke

The fotos like they show up:

Small icebergs in Seno Pia – Enjoying the drifting iceflieds: little and big boat – A jewel: Caleta Alakush and view to Cordillera Darwin – Kefir-rocks near Caleta Brecknock – This is no promise of the nice kind – Martín Pescador, the biggest kingfisher species of South America –The Torres del Paine normally are hidden by clouds, we were lucky to find them taking a sunbath – Guanaco girl – We like it in the ice, a second visit to a glacier – Dolphins say hallo and play with Anke – Start for a trip ashore – Patagonian blossom – One of the biggest traditional wood cathedrals of Chiloé was built in Castro – Last but not least: a Blue Whale, so big that you only can see a part of its body

