

MANCA 2016 LEG 1 BENALMADENA TO LAGOS JUNE 1 TO...JUNE 27

Part 1

The early Spring sputtered on for the longest time. Preparations seemed endless as Manca needed one more tweak, one more repair, one more spare part, one more stitch in the well worn sails and canvas covers. After handing over large sums of euros to Frank Naval in Fuengirola, I thanked him for his expert assistance and promised to give him a special mention on my blog.

After nearly 10 years of service the old pine passerelle was retired when Thomas proudly produced a new carbon ladder, painted and named "MANCA" just one day before we departed. It weighs about 10 kilos and is very easy to manage.



Speed and first class work from Thomas. A brand new passerelle for MANCA!

Crew arrived on June 1st. We gathered our resolve and set sails for points west. With a strange mixture of no wind, too much wind and fog we eventually made it to Ocean village in Gibraltar. Here we were delayed as some crew needed to top up their Schengen visa time and by some very stiff winds from the west.

Feeding time for gulls on our first morning sail when leaving Fuengirola.



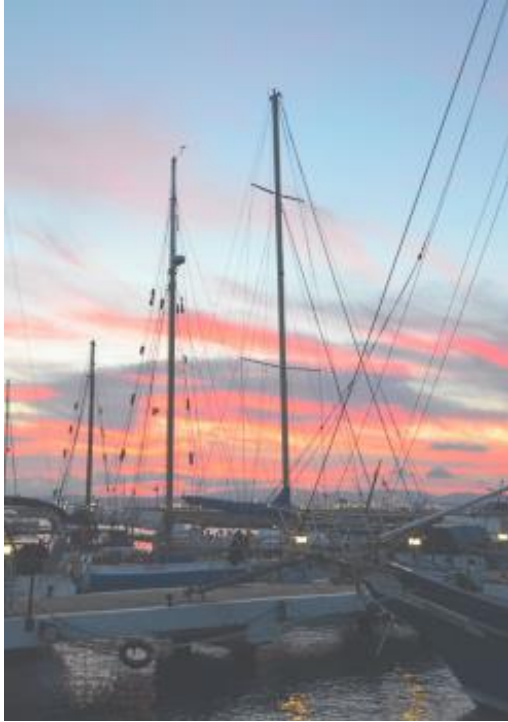


Manca ready to sail after extensive and detailed repairs and maintenance.

After a few days we decamped across the border to La Linea in Spain. The Marina has now been open for a few years . The little Spanish town is close by. Tapas are cheap and tasty. You can watch the air traffic from your cockpit. We also enjoyed delicious meals onboard.

Mango and chocolate desert.





Sunset from Ocean Village Gibraltar .

Fresh fruit so good in Spain.





The fog finally clears at Sotogrande so we can make a run to Gibraltar.

Helicopter spotting over Gibraltar. Moorish castle behind.



Military planes entertain from our dock in La Linea.

Manca at La Linea. The Rock behind. This dock copped a big blow from the west with a nasty chop that kept us rocking and awake. It took 5 spring lines and rubber snubbers to settle Manca down. Next time snug in further East at this marina.



The stroll across the runway at Gibraltar is fun when you cross to La Linea Spain. Keep your head down.

Lunch on Manca. We often eat out at night to enjoy local inexpensive food. La Linea has great food. Welcome party for new crew on Manca.





Part of welcome party for crew.

La Linea yacht arrives without engine in the gale and needs a lot of help docking.



Church and dancers at La Linea ton plaza.

GOING BACKWARDS IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR.

After a long wait to fuel up at Ocean Village Marina and for the westerly gales to depart we thought we had the tides and currents correct. We left the dock at about 10.30 and headed for Barbate about 44 miles West. We would finally escape Gibraltar. However after about 4 hours it was obvious we had no chance. We had made barely 2 miles west against the tide . We bagged it and returned to La Linea to rethink our strategy.

TARIFFA

The crew had a chance to take the bus to Tariffa one of the great surf beaches of Europe and certainly one of the windiest.

Surf was flat this day. Crew photo. ..Tariffa beach.



Doggy enjoys the surf at Tarrifa Beach

After a frustrating weather delay we decide to cross The Strait of Gibraltar to Ceuta with a short weather opening. As before, (last year see 2015 Legs) we get a rollicking westerly wind romping Manca across the traffic filled Strait, with the dolphins always ready to help with their frolicking around the bow.



Big dolphin.

From the Oasis Restaurant on the top of the fort overlooking Ceuta you get a grand view of the sunset over Gibraltar.



ESCAPING THE CLUTCHES OF THE STRAIT.

The wind was forecast in the morning for 17 knots from the East. This is plenty for Ceuta as the forecasts can often be a lot less than the reality. At the crack of dawn we are ready to go. I looked up at the hills: FOG. Oh no! Waited a bit and the Levante seemed strong enough to break it up. We would hug the African coast and avoid the traffic and the set a course for Cadiz. Happily the wind filled even more the fog scattered and we had a good push against the tidal streams making 6.5 most of the time.



Dolphins leap as we leave Ceuta. Crew photo!

Daybreak and fog along the Morocco shore. The dolphins came to say we would be alright.



We finally get a break in the weather. Barbate is 40 miles west if we can make that with the forecast levanter we can finally escape the Strait of Gibraltar. Guessing which side of the Strait to follow and avoid the confusing opposing tidal stream is difficult. We leave Ceuta at the crack of dawn. Oh boy there is fog around but enough visibility to avoid the shipping....IF it does not reform. It is already blowing 20+. This is good. We make steady progress heading west. The wind picks up and so does an opposing stream on the Moroccan shore. But we press on. By 9 am we are almost abeam of Tariffa on the Spanish shore but we have reports that is blowing 44 to 50K at Barbate so there is no chance of pulling in there. We must press on to Cadiz and hope the wind is down enough to dock.. But we have many daylight hours ahead.

THE WIND BEGINS TO REALLY BLOW HARD

Now the wind is increasing. the wave from the East are opposed to the flooding tide and current into The Med. We have been warned about Trafalgar Bank. It is shallow and the waves could be very steep and dangerous. So we steer a course south of Trafalgar Bank and add more distance. Cadiz will be 78 miles off by the time we clear the Banks and make the rhum line for Rota on the Bay Of Cadiz.



Heavy seas and very heavy traffic. At some point we have to cross the lanes to make Cadiz. Crew photo.

As the morning wears on the wind builds. We are reefed down to a tiny 1/3 jib only. Manca is surfing on short steep waves. Crew have been strapped on long ago ; a policy of once true wind hits 18. We are now getting gusts over 40. I was down below to check the voltage on the batteries when the crew called out : "We have 12.7!" I thought great batteries are fine but when I came up they meant our SOG had hit 12.7 knots!

Wave cresting ahead of Manca on leg to Cadiz.



Very short steep cresting waves. Good thing they were behind as the Levante hurtled us west towards Cadiz. At one point the waves were so close together we had one wave breaking under the bow, another mid ships and a third breaking under the stern. Manca was in a great heaving bath of foam. If you look at the trough on the left you get a better idea of the wave heights.

Surfing at 12.7 Manca handled the waves beautifully. The big problem was 8 ships approaching ahead and how to jibe away from their path as they could not steer off to our starboard because of the dangers of Trafalgar Banks. We managed to pick a short flat spot in the breaking waves and completed a fully controlled jibe to port after first reefing in the jib.





With all crew strapped on we are safe. As we approach Cadiz the wind abates and the wave heights decrease. We will complete the 78 miles under 12 hours with Rota making a safe haven before a wild 3 days of extreme winds arrive the next day. In ten years of sailing Manca these were the most extreme downwind conditions and my hat off to Bruce Farr for designing Manca; such a beautiful safe, fast, yacht.

ROTA

What an incredible relief to be safely tied up in Rota. A beautiful clean safe harbour!

Impressive light with the red band at Rota. A great beacon of safety. How did the ancient sailors manage without these navigation beauties?





Rota Beach evening shadows. The Naval docks are in the far distance.

These massive concrete interlocking “toes” are used to try to withstand the gales in breakwaters. But I have seen them displaced by the waves



Carpese lunch on Manca in Rota.

Part of the fishing fleet at Rota



Rota Marina is such a treat. A beautiful little town with a fast ferry right beside the dock to speed you across the Bay of Cadiz to the ancient city centre. Nearby is a busy naval port with lots of aircraft and ships on maneuvers.



Tribute to Perez in Rota.