

## MANCA 2015

### A CRUISE AND LEARN IN THE ALBORAN SEA INCLUDING A “SEA MONSTER” ENCOUNTER

I decided to accept a keen sailor who was seeking some coaching and practice before taking her Yacht Master Exams in August. The plan was to sail out of Marina Smir each day and give “Captain Kim” as much time on the water as possible. While I no longer keep my CYA Instructor’s Certificate current I was able to give some good tips and have fun sailing each day.

Of course we had to adapt to the conditions. Some days were too hot to move; others we had to take time out to do some serious dolphin spotting. On the crossing the route planning was blown to bits when we picked up a 34 knot westerly on the Gibraltar Strait and were suddenly doing 9.4 knots instead of the predicted average of 5.5 knots. Another day our course and ETA abandoned to engage in a dramatic “Sea Monster Rescue”. Some days were lazy days or perhaps spent studying the complex tides and currents of Gibraltar, or learning to service a winch or two. Mentioned a previous blog we took an interesting day trip Assilah. We also took time for cooking some great meals on Manca or dining ashore.

The practice area took us: out to Capo Negro, off the shores of Marina Smir, west to Ceuta, west of Ceuta, east across the Strait to La Duquesa, west to the overly expensive Sotogrande to finish in Gibraltar for the start of Kim’s certification course. All sails in the region of the Alboran Sea.



Shearwaters and small diving birds feeding near Smir. The dolphins were down below.

The Dolphins came over to Manca for an hour of fun; interrupting the sailing lesson!





Playful and intelligent...beautiful dolphins.

The calm water gave a great reflection of the leaping dolphin.





I wished I had fresh herring for tips for the performance. The dolphins know we are enjoying the show!

Dolphin plays on starboard bow!





Captain Kim practicing the perfect professional touch on the big wheel!  
Small wrist movements are the trick!

Learning to break down and service a two speed, self tailing, Lewmar winch is all part of the course! The help was much appreciated.





One practice sail took us west of Ceuta to this border town of Morocco.

Not unlike the Seven Hills of Rome there are seven of these watch towers in Ceuta on seven hills near the border with Morocco.



Ceuta is a great location for a stopover. Great history, restaurants and a good vantage point to check the weather before crossing the Strait. If you go to the top of the hill with the old fort you can get great sunsets and with a westerly view, you can see almost to New York!



Sunset on the fort above Ceuta. Now it is bristling with communications antenna; in the past with canons.

The Ceuta outer harbor and Gibraltar in the distance.



Two Portuguese training yachts visited Ceuta in July.

Sunset on Manca at Hercules Marina Ceuta.





Dock reflections at sunset and half tide.

Navigating around the big ships on the Gibraltar Strait is a very real practical experience. You are in charge of your ship and they are coming from many directions at various speeds. Later the fog started to move in; at first creating weird mirages.



The wind built, as it almost always does, as we crossed the Strait. Seven knots were forecast on Windfinder. After about one hour we have 34 knots. Manca is doing what she does well; rocketing along at 9.4 knots. I have a policy that we don't do the tethers and life jackets when the wind hits 16k. I forgot to tell Captain Kim that when I am at the helm and it is getting sloppy; *I sit on the lee side*. This is a much drier position. The buckets of salty water almost set off her auto-inflate jacket!



Buckets of salty stuff on the windward side! No worries it was really hot in La Duquesa with plenty of time to wash down and to dry out.

Puerto La Duquesa has raised the bar for a beautifully well maintained marina. The presentation of a good bottle of Spanish red upon arrival, is also a great tradition. Much appreciated and should be the custom in all Spanish ports ...in my opinion! The beach is about 50 meters from your yacht on the right.



From a distance these birds just look like a larger heavy seagull. But when one swoops right across your stern the camera gets a good shot of a Western Mediterranean Shearwater. With wide, powerful wings and soaring close to the water they fly much more like an albatross than gulls.

Figure 20 We eat well on Manca and ashore if we dine out. Here we have made chicken marinated in white wine, pan fried spuds and a ratatouille. The chicken just needs 5-6 minutes in the Jamie Oliver pressure cooker.





Here your skipper lends a hand to stuff the peppers.

The peppers or dolmades are stuffed, hats on and ready in just five minutes in the Jamie Olive pressure cooker.





A blue moon over Manca at Sotogrande near the end of July.

**HERE FOLLOWS THE TALE OF THE DRAMATIC RESCUE OF A “SEA MONSTER” WITH THE HEROIC EFFORTS OF CAPTAIN KIM AND THE SAILING SKILLS OF MANCA CREW.**

We slipped our lines from the expensive (exorbitant) stay at Sotogrande just after sunrise. We were underway when we saw a small clutch of birds flocking around in the very calm waters. After a quick look through the binoculars I diverted to get a closer look. Images of a Moby Dick or a giant squid flashed through my mind. Was this a Sea Monster waiting to lure us into the deep?

Sunrise over Sotogrande and we are underway for the last hop.





The calm waters on course to Gibraltar belie the drama awaiting us.

As we draw near to the disturbance in the sea I become more apprehensive. The Crew is on full “Sea Monster Alert”. What can it be? What is that swirling in the water? How big is it? Should we run or investigate?

Then one large strange eye appears out of the deep. Is it; “a one eyed flying (underwater) purple people eater”?



A strange shape takes form and we suddenly understand! The Monster is revealed!

We have come upon a Monster Moon or Sunfish in distress. We can see a hook behind the eye and fishing line tangled around the fins making her flap with ungainly random turns. What will we do?



I am able to slowly reverse Manca toward the distressed beauty; being careful not to run over her.

Captain Kim springs into action. She grabs a life jacket and tether then, securely attached to Manca, Kim bravely climbs down to the swim grid clutching a good pair of pliers. First Kim is able to untangle the lines that have been wrapped around the giant fish for weeks judging by the weed growing on the line. Then...





With nerves of steel, great determination and the skill of a surgeon, Kim extracts the large barbed hook from behind the Moonfish's eye without any damage and comes up smiling! Great job Captain Kim! The happy fish gave some very strong wags of her tail and with a wink for thanks, she happily dove back into the safety of the deep. Well done Team Manca!

After the happy Rescue of the “Sea Monster” we sail off to Gibraltar arriving in time to dock before any gusting, sheering winds come later in the day. The Rock beckons with all the tales of heroic efforts, a castle, Great Sieges, tunnels, caves and of course the macaques still “defending” the Rock. As usual the great Queensway Quay Marina staff was on hand to help.

Manca approaching Europa Point.



Figure 33 Europa Point and the Mosque, a tribute to the Moors from the past!

Europa Point marks the beginning of “The New World” and the end of “The Known World”.



Queensway Quay Marina with the classic 45 metre yacht, “Windrose of Amsterdam”, on the right, near our berth. The friendly skipper happened to be from near Launceston, Tasmania where my father grew up and learned to sail.

A farewell feast for Captain Kim of salmon, poached in white wine, mixed vegetables, creamy mashed potatoes and a few bubbles.



The three weeks blew by so fast. Kim joined her sailing school and with luck the Moonfish is off on a new safe adventure.

Kim wrote: "Thank you for allowing me to stay on your beautiful yacht "Manca". I feel so privileged to have you as a friend and a tutor. Maybe someday I will return."

Cheers Kim you will make a great Skipper!

Terry

S/Y Manca

Gibraltar

August 11 2015