

LEG 9 - MANCA 2014

MOROCCO MARINA SMIR, CEUTA AND RETURN TO SPAIN INCLUDING SOME STRANGE CREATURES OF THE SEA

1. MARINA SMIR WAITING FOR CREW
2. SMIR TO CEUTA BORDER CONTROL FIASCO 12NM
3. CEUTA TO ESTEPONA MONSTER ENCOUNTER 33NM
4. ESTEPONA TO BAJADILLA STRONG WIND WARNING 17NM
5. BAJADILLA TO BENALMADENA ANOTHER CREATURE 23NM

1. MARINA SMIR WAITING FOR CREW

While the crew took off on a grand tour of Morocco your trusty skipper stayed in Marina Smir. Good thing too as a big storm was brewing and Manca needed a minder to make sure she was well secured to a very solid dock. For two days wind and rain came from all directions. I can bet the farmers in the Riff Mountains were delighted! Me too as the canvass on Manca came out very fresh and clean.

After the rains the dock was left with some very large puddles which gave me some great reflections to shoot.



Sunset Marina Smir with dockside reflections after the rain storm.

There is a constant stream of locals and tourists who come to the docks to dream about the seas and sailing.

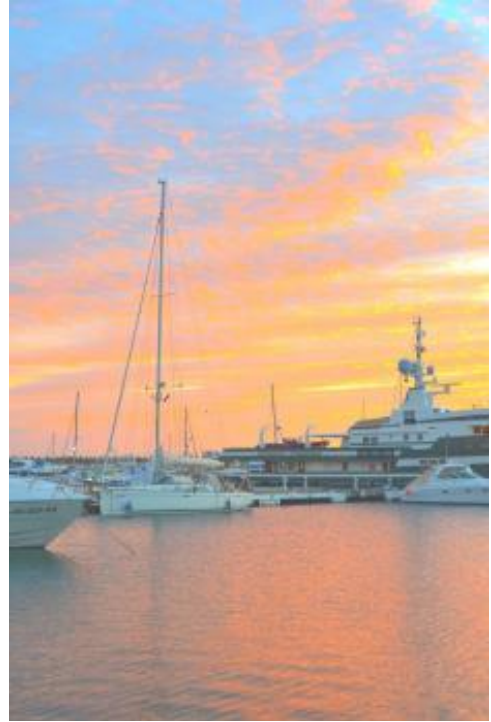


The disturbed weather also brought some great clouds at sunrise over Marina Smir.



Sunrise after the storm Marina Smir. The large steel motor yacht named "Steel", dwarfs Manca on the left.

Sunrise over Manca



The clearing showers bought many different cloud patterns.

2. MARINA SMIR TO CEUTA AND THE PASSPORT FIASCO

October 17. The crew returns after a few days with stories to tell of: Tetouan, Chefchouan, Fez and Tangier. One included leaving all the passports behind in Fez. But after a few phone calls they were all safely delivered the next morning, by a trustworthy local courier, to Tangier.

After some discussion with the crew we come up with PLAN A

“PLAN A” Route to return from Morocco to Spain. Plane will be waiting at Malaga.



The short sail from Marina Smir to Ceuta included watching for flying fish, birds and some strange creatures. The Crew were able to net one of these.



Great spotters

The jelly fish appeared to have three parts. Swimming inside, still alive, were small shrimp like hoppers.



This is a very heavy bird with big wings. Maybe it is a gannet?

I think this is a pair of albatross speeding by.



THE ARRIVAL IN SPAIN FIASCO

The plan was to check back into Spain by making sure, after arriving by sea, that we were legally and correctly stamped into the country after checking out of Morocco. I knew the Morocco- Spanish border is at the moment a very sensitive place. Some officials are jumpy. So I was quite apprehensive and hoped that things would go smoothly.

This was my *third* time at doing this. The *first* time we were directed to the Police at the Ferry Dock. With the meager directions at this time I spent over an hour trying to find the correct office. Finally I was shown to a bench and waited for another hour for the Big Chief to stamp the passports. Ok done! I returned to the same place about two months later for another stamp. This *second* time I was met by a different official who said: "No you must take the bus to The Fonterra." Ceuta is quite a small enclave so this only took about 15 minutes. We walked along the wired fences and crossed lanes of car traffic to the office. The Official stamped the passports, barely taking time to stop reading his book and we were quickly on our way back to Manca. Great I am thinking, this will be a piece of cake in October.

For the *third* attempt in October we all went straight to The Fronterra thinking this was the correct procedure. Here we were met by the Guardia Civil. We explained in English and a smattering of Spanish that we had arrived by yacht and needed a stamp. A "Big Fellow" took all 5 passports and then after only two were stamped we were taken off to see "Mr. Hostile" who kept using the word "illegale". Oops! I think we have a problem. Then he took my passport and disappeared for some time. I am now getting very nervous. "Mr. Hostile" returns. He says he has phoned the "Big Big Boss" who says we are "illegale". I have two adults and two juveniles in tow. What to do? Eventually we are taken to "Mr. Helpful" who claims to speak English. Well he speaks a little English but only listens in Spanish. This did not help. Finally my passport re-appears with the rest. They are taken to the same window where (see the *second* time above) I had been stamped in 15 seconds or less. "Mr. Ruler" gets out the ancient ruler (remember those?) and proceeds to put two strokes through the stamp in the passports with an image of a car! We were "illegale" because we had not arrived by car so the car stamp must be nullified. Now still in shock we are ushered back across the no -man's- land wired fences to taxis where we must return to: the *first* base: The Police at The Ferry Dock. Images of Spanish jails are racing through my mind and hoping they have improved since Franco's terrible times.

At the Ferry Dock we manage to find a Policeman who understood what we wanted. I now knew the routine. The police only work a few minutes before a ferry is loading. With luck one was loading in about 10 minutes so then The Police would be available to help us. We waited for most of the passengers to load and then found our; "Mr. Very Friendly Big Boss". Yes he would help us and yes he knows what to do.

So after scanning our passports and copying my arrival document which I had luckily completed for The Hercules Marina, we hear and see the big stamp bang! On to the passports, the EU Irish one excepted. All of us are now "legale" in Spain! Relief! We are not going to jail! We can go back to Manca and celebrate our arrival back in Spain with a very cold beer.

3. CEUTA TO ESTEPONA A MONSTER ENCOUNTER

Early October 19 we are relieved to see the fog over The Strait of Gibraltar starting to lift and by 0915 we are safe to leave for Estepona. I cannot remember, after sailing for 36 years, having such diligent lookouts or watches! They missed nothing!



Crew was good a bird spotting.
Identification was another problem.

Not too far from Estepona Fionn yells: “Shark! Declan come and see the shark!” Quite close we see what looks like a slow moving shark fin.

Is it a shark, a monster, or what?



So we decide to circle around being careful not to get too close or to hurt the creature.



The UFM Unidentified Fish Monster turns out to be a sun fish or moon fish we think!

The Rock in a Misty Mood on our last look back at Gibraltar.



Crew Second Mate "Stem" keeping a good lookout for whales.

Young crew makes easy work of diving into the lockers to find one more fender!



Spanish ladies enjoy a day on the water! A fun party at Estepona!

Sharing the dock with the gulls could get a bit messy. The dock needed a hose job each day. The Marina staff were very good with the hose.

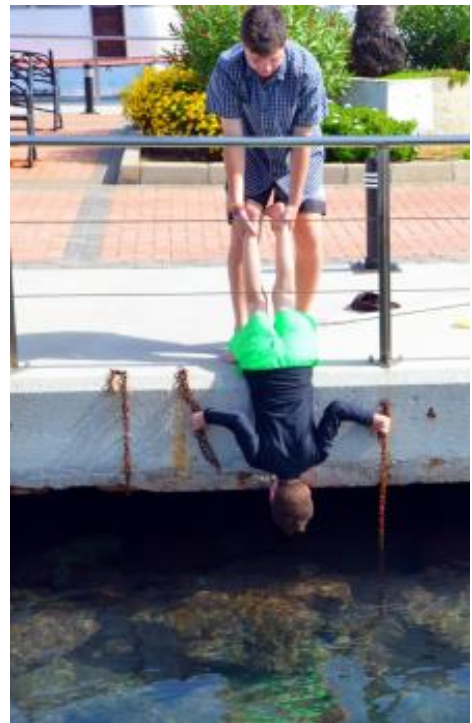




Sunset at Estepona

4. ESTEPONA TO BAJADILLA/MARBELLA

Soccer ball under the dock. Rescue team at work. Soon the east wind blew the ball out and play quickly resumed.



October 20. PLAN A almost worked except that the forecast for the day called for 28-30 knots at Benalmadena from the East. We decided not to risk it as the reality could be even much stronger winds. The crew has run out of time and wanted a couple of days in Malaga before their flights to Roma. So they pack their bags and trundle off.

5. BAJADILLA TO BENALMADENA

October 21 brings no wind and a flat sea. The putter to Benalmadena is uneventful except for a few photo ops.



The Tern is very quick to spot small fish, dive and swallow.

Northern Gannet keep their distance from the yacht! These are hard to catch on a moving platform.





Spanish fishers near Bajadilla

Fish boat near Fuengirola



The modern light and the ancient watch tower near Fuengirola

Fuengirola Castle





We spot one last sea monster near the Benlmadena cardinal mark at the entrance to the marina.

The ancient Benlmadena stone watch tower is now inland and surrounded by real estate



The Benlmadena promenade has some great mosaics

An evening view of the Puerto Deportivo Benalmadena looking south east.



A north wind brings an off shore evening sail.

A monster cruiser is lurking offshore. Might be the world's largest one just launched.





A massive mistral way north east from the coast of France produced a swell with tender surf for the beginning boogie boarders on Benalmadena beach.

The gardener at Benalmadena Marina does a great job! This little baby was planted by Manca crew in August after sailing about 800 nautical miles.



Leg 9 is over! On October 21 we pulled into the fuel dock to register for a few days of R&R.



Bye! Bye! Bon Voyage. See you later!

One thousand one hundred and eleven nautical miles done since April 9 2014

Terry and Manca,

FINAL 2 Revised October 28, 2014 Estepona, Spain.