



Lagos - Portugal

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It was going to be one of those make or break things. The delivery trip of Annecy....

We picked her up, pretty as a picture and whiter than she'll ever be again from Hythe Village Marina in Southampton. The guys at Sea Ventures had done an absolutely sterling job of preparing her to our specifications. They pulled out all the stops to finish things off and accommodate changes we made last minute like sourcing and fitting radar within 8 hours! Big thanks must go out to those guys - highly recommended.

All the crew were there - myself, Jules, Graham Bond (Yacht master and friend) and Steve Mitchell (my mate) so there was nothing left to do but set sail for the first time and head for Falmouth. Some shake down! After a nice gentle stint of motor sailing through the night and checking all the boats gadgets like its course computer, chart plotter and auto helm, the wind started to pick up and the sails were out. It seemed like for the first time, she was fully dressed. What a great sail! She proved to go even better than she looks. Very satisfying. We went through every point of sail to get to our destination, sometimes heading completely off course just so that we could turn round to run back down wind and get the head sail poled out. An indicator of how well things were going when the whole crew had been up all night on watch! No-one wanted to go to sleep in case they missed something. We arrived at Falmouth as fresh as we left Hythe, moored her up and set off to taste the delights of Cornish ale and real seafood.

A week later, we returned to Falmouth to begin the all together more serious trip of getting Annecy across the Bay of Biscay and down through Portugal - destination Gibraltar. A slight crew change was in order which now included me, Graham Bond, Ric Clark (my brother) and Carn Sheppard (a friend from Bude, Cornwall). Fully stocked with all the food, water and fuel we may need, the time had come to get going. Off into the night we went, disappointed that we would have to motor sail all night again. We sailed on and off for days. The excitement had changed into routine as the miles tumbled. The Bay of Biscay was like a swimming pool, almost inviting in its calmness. Cape Finistere off Northern Spain eventually came into view with an excitement to break the monotony. With it came the big seas and the high winds we were all waiting for! We poled out, prevented and ran and ran. 35Knots of wind and full sail just to keep ahead of the sea. We had made the Portuguese trades. Even the dolphins and whales that regularly came to keep us company and save our sanity were enjoying the big sea. Mile after mile fell to Annecy as she somehow realised she was going home for the first time.

842 miles from Falmouth, we made our first stop, Sines in Portugal where we were welcomed as much as we welcomed Sines! A quick 80 mile hop round the corner of Cape St. Vincent saw us arrive in our home port of Lagos where we stayed for a few days recovering and planning our future. Reluctantly, the next leg to Gibraltar was soon undertaken where I was to finish off a teaching qualification and Graham was to learn to Dive. The sailing was typically good as we'd come to expect, leading us to our berth at 3am. The journey was over. Our love affair had just begun.