

CRUISING in PLOES 8th to 14th October 2017

Skipper: Roger Parker

Crew: Jill Parker, Marc Overton, Neil Trask (Photos), Hugh Johns (Author)

At least we got the most unpleasant part of this trip over at the beginning. Many of our fellow passengers on the Saturday evening "Queasy Jet" were in full party mood even before they got on the flight and made liberal use of the trolley service to sustain their condition. There wasn't much chance of a quiet doze for the rest of us. However it was great to get out into a warm and humid evening at Dalaman and forget the cool gusty winds of England.

Sunday morning brought the only rain we were to see all week and the humidity cleared while we did some shopping, changed money and sorted out the crew change paperwork. After lunch, the usual obliging breeze blew up and we were ready to go sailing. We re-familiarised ourselves with the procedure for "lazy line" moorings and left without incident. Under full sail we tacked out in to Fethyie outer harbour beyond the island, and returned on a near perfect run to berth back in the marina without any fuss. It was a very pleasant sail for about three hours in brilliant sunshine. The deflating dinghy was examined and a G&T helped us decided that, as it was due for replacement soon, it would be better to defer any amateurish attempts at repair and we wandered off in to a town for a huge supper.

Sailing in Turkish waters at that time of year can be remarkably civilised. It's not like sailing in the UK where there always seems to be some ghastly pressure to rise early and catch the last of the tide or beat some front coming across from the northwest. In Turkey, the wind is very obliging and doesn't really start until mid morning and then builds itself gently. This enables a crew to rise without haste, have showers, send emissaries for fresh pastries and linger over breakfast. The only interruption can be the 6:00am "call to prayer". This Monday morning we finished our shopping and sorting out, motored out into light winds, beat out into a southwest breeze making for Dokukbas Br.. The wind became more westerly putting us on a run towards Karacaoren Ar. so we put the mainsail away and continued under foresail alone.

The sail went really well with the wind moving round and increasing just as we needed it. It was thrilling to see dolphins playing in front of the boat as we rounded the headland; then they swam ahead and crossed in front of us before they were gone. It seems Ploes wasn't fast enough for them to ride the bow wave. They were a rather puzzling sight because, whenever we went for a swim, the sea seemed rather sterile and devoid of fish except for minnow-sized things; certainly, no "Blue Planet" here. What were the dolphins finding to eat?

We passed through the gap before Ruin Island and got helped to a line and shoreline mooring. It was a strange mooring procedure: a marinara met us in a small tender, took a line from one side of a bow bridle and passed it through a loop on a riser from a ground chain. He then used his boat to push us round until we were almost across the wind and took a long line to a cleat on the

rocks. After he had gone, we doubled up the long line with a black rope that needed washing. Later, the guy became our water-taxi to the restaurant. The only problem with this process was that Ploes was left almost broadside to the breeze and tended to roll until the swell died right away later in the night. Ice creams were purchased from a boat that came alongside but we still had time to swim before the taxi took us to the Karacaoran Restaurant.

We were suckers for a good breakfast. The water taxi returned to take us to the restaurant for breakfast of omelette, excellent fresh orange juice, Turkish coffee, home made bread, apple jam and more; need I go on! We motored to Darbogaz Koyu, anchored and swam before the "ice cream boat" turned up and sold us apple pies and fresh bread but we didn't have quite enough change so he accepted a cold beer in part payment. We motored through the passage inside Gemiler Island and anchored for lunch before the civilised wind arose and we started sailing. However on this occasion it soon died and we anchored just short of Olou Deniz to swim and snorkel including swimming along to get a view of the famous resort beach with its many parasailers, paragliders and inland salt water lagoon. The beach didn't appear very crowded but it was getting rather late in the season. For the evening we motored back to where we were the previous night, and took the water-taxi to the restaurant.

We were kept awake that night by the boat rolling despite there being no wind and us being on an official mooring buoy well inside the bay. Worst of all was that the rolling caused the plywood bulkhead at the companionway steps to creak loudly. As the rolling stopped and started this racket stopped and restarted, waking us up each time when we had just managed to doze off!

<Insert Photo: Looking out from the bay of creaks and rocking>

Wednesday's wind was less obliging but we motored out and started sailing west on a broad reach. However, there was hardly any wind and we only managed speeds of around 1 to 2.5 knots. Ploes sailed very slowly on to a bay just before Gocek to anchor while we enjoyed a swim. We looked for the dolphins again but they had obviously got other interests that afternoon. A fin like object in the distance generated some excitement but when we got closer it proved to be a beer bottle. There was no wildlife in the bay but this was compensated by the stunning view. By a combination of motoring and slow sailing we reached Marin Turk Village Marina just outside the town and, in the evening, walked along the shore footpath to the strangely named Kebab Hospital restaurant.

Towards midnight Marc and Neil were relaxing on deck, enjoying a final drink of the night, when Neil heard a fairly distinctive 'splish' sound. Now we've heard all sorts of strange sounds overnight in Turkey the last two years, but after letting this one process in his (slightly alcohol-affected) mind for a short while Neil decided this one needed investigating. They didn't have to wander down the pontoon very far when they happened upon a fully clothed swimmer – a lady that had just travelled all the way from the UK but somehow failed in the final few centimetres in boarding her boat. She had a friend looking on,

rather surprised, but there didn't seem to be much progress in the rescue department. The water wasn't cold and the 'casualty' was fine, just embarrassed at being stuck in the water between her boat and the pontoon. After ascertaining she didn't want to be pulled out, Marc and Neil set about fitting the swimming ladder to her boat so that she could climb up. This involved jumping aboard and unfolding this apparatus by mobile phone torchlight. Having resisted the urge to take a phone photo at the same time (Her friend would have had that one promptly on social media), we got the ladder fitted and all was well again – our new friend went to dry off. It wasn't until the next day that our heroic duo was able to relay this story to their crewmates. We were doubtful and tended to put it down to the G&Ts; the only thing that did remain a figment of their imagination was getting invited aboard for thank you drinks!

A crewmember cooked a large breakfast on Thursday and we motored south, past Gocek Adasi, to anchor in the shallower waters between the islands of Yassica Adalari where we swam and snorkelled. The swim and snorkel between the islands was most enjoyable although it seemed to be quite a tourist hot-spot and a continuous stream of gulleets came in, each one only anchoring for an hour or so. Ploes' anchor chain bounced off its electric capstan as we hauled it in after lunch. A considerable amount of the cable ran out before it stopped and it then proved tedious getting it all back in.

In the afternoon we continued to motor south but soon found a reasonable southwest breeze and sailed across the whole bay to Kargi Buku where we anchored quite close to the rocks and swam and snorkelled. Finally we sailed to the Yat Mola Noktasi restaurant at the end of the Tomb Bay as the other restaurant seemed full with a flotilla.

The restaurant in Tomb Bay had some incredible fauna but not really the type we had come to see. The marinara who helped us with the lazy line couldn't have been more friendly and helpful but his co-worker, who was the waiter in the restaurant, was a bit too over-attentive and wanted to give everyone a massage. A very small kitten pestered us all evening while we were eating and refused to be deterred from trying to help people eat or sit on people's laps. Marc even took it some distance off but it simply followed him back to us. The masseur seemed to think there wasn't much he could do about a cat.

<Insert Photo: Hold tight to Tomb Bay cat>

Later it walked on to the boat with us. We chucked it back on to the pontoon and raised the passarelle like a drawbridge. It studied the situation for sometime then made a leap up on to the gangplank. It was caught and chucked off again. It seemed determined to board Ploes and jumped on to the adjoining yacht, which appeared to be unoccupied, to see if it could leap across from there. It realised this option wasn't practical and returned to the pontoon. The skipper used the cockpit cushions, raised on edge, to build a barrier across the sugar-scoop. The kitten studied this very carefully for a while then made an even more hazardous leap. It touched the top of the cushions like a steeplechaser and landed in the cockpit. The reaction kicked

the cushions into the water. They were recovered and kitty ejected again. People took turns manning the defences using such implements as they could muster; boathooks, towels etc. but a permanent solution that would last the night was required; we couldn't sleep with the windows and hatches closed, it was far too hot. Eventually, I reluctantly decided to throw a bucket of water at it next time it got ready to spring. As it crouched on the extreme edge of the pontoon I slung the water. Astonishingly, the irritating animal managed to dodge, I think it barely got wet but it did seem to get the message that it wasn't wanted on voyage. It trotted back along the pontoons and gave no more trouble.

We did see it with a larger cat the following morning, probably its parent. Basically, as with poor the world over, the young get sent out to beg; they are more cute.

The restaurant also had a huge Great Dane sized dog, which was really quite friendly but had a very intimidating bark. It seemed to be employed to guard the toilets. In the daytime it was intimidating. At night it was The Hound of the Baskervilles.

On Friday morning we started by walking along the beach and up the hill to the tombs but found the way-marking ran out as soon as we turned inland so we gave up and returned, scrambling along the sea edge. We motored around the corner to Round Bay, swam ashore and looked at the bay and the ruins, which were in disappointingly poor condition and full of litter. The beach here had a new access road with power cables strung along it. It seems evident that this is likely to be the next resort to be developed. We were sailing off southwards but then an extremely observant crewmember realised we were short of a fender and we returned to Round Bay and recovered it. We sailed to the gap between Tersane Adasi and Domuz Adasi but motored through it as we were virtually heading the wind in the gap. In two tacks we sailed to Kucukaga Koyu and anchored for a short swim before sailing back under jib alone and motoring through the Darbogaz Gap. As evening approach and the west wind decreased we sailed in to Wall Bay and berthed alongside.

On our final Saturday we decided to break with the usual tradition of sailing and then cleaning the boat in the afternoon by reversing this procedure to take advantage of the afternoon breeze. In effect, this policy gave us almost another day of sailing. We sailed from Wall Bay across to Fethyie in a gentle west wind but had a long wait for the fuel berth. Final cleaning and packing up left time for a shower and a walk to a sea front restaurant. All went well with the return journey but there was a rather long wait for the flight because so much time had to be allowed for the many security checks etc.

Despite having been quite late in the season it had been an excellent week of sailing in very reliable weather. Ploes performed well and, apart from its dinghy, gave us no problems.