

Sailing in the Bay of Naples (Golfo di Napoli)

By Jeanne Annett

On May 11, 2004, a small contingent of Albertan sailors set off for a sailing adventure in the Italy's Tyrrhenian Sea and the Bay of Naples. The group included SBYC members Luigi and Raffaella Morgantini, Richard and Anne Feilden, Jeanne Annett and good friends of the Morgantini's, Roger and Mona Creasey, of Calgary. Naples is an enjoyable two-hour train ride from Termini Station in Rome through the regions of Lazio and the fertile plains of Campania. Our final destination, Torre Annunziata, required an easy transfer of trains in Naples and another 30-minute ride south. The accommodating skippers of the two chartered boats provided transfer from the train station to the respective marinas. One boat was harboured in an industrial marina in Torre Annunziata; the other in a marina in the next community two miles south, at Castellammare di Stabia. However, since the metropolitan area of Naples is the third largest city in Italy (after Rome and Milan) it was difficult to know where one municipal boundary stops and the other starts. The Morgantini's and the Creasey's boarded "Blue Too", a Beneteau Oceanis 39. Richard, Anne and Jeanne shared "Fosca", a Grand Soleil 45. Fosca's skipper, Enzo (Vincenzo) explained that the Gran Soleil is essentially identical to a Swan except that Fosca's rig is the racing option. (what a treat!).



Marina at Castellammare di Stabia



"Fosca": A Gran Soleil 45

Our arrival to the boats was rather late in the day, so after a quick orientation, the skipper of Blue Too guided us to the community of Pompeii for some excellent authentic Neapolitan fare. One of Napoli's great claims to fame is being the birthplace of the pizza! The Neapolitans have a passion for good food and key elements of their cuisine include pasta, olive oil, pomodoro (little, flavourful tomatoes) and the freshest vegetables. Another specialty of the region, bufalo (a fresh mozzarella cheese made with buffalo milk) is to die for. The chance to live on board with two skippers who love to cook was a great opportunity for cultural exchange and experience the local cuisine far away from the usual eateries found along tourist corridors. Through the course of this trip, we were treated to many interesting meals and indulged in the excellent local wines of Campania and regular nightcaps of limoncello.

Settling on board was relatively easy. The boats having already been provisioned by the skippers and a hostess (who traveled aboard Blue Too). The advantage of chartering with a skipper included less concern for liability of a boat in foreign waters and weather systems as well as local knowledge of good destinations. Fortunately for the crew of Fosca, the skipper turned out to be an excellent shipmate. “Enzo” also has a substantial history of racing to his credit; he has served occasionally as a reserve helmsman during the Mascalzone America Cup challenge and sparring partner for the Italian Olympic team. After breakfast, Fosca met up with Blue Too off the coast of Torre Annunziata and headed northwest off the Naples shore for 20 nautical miles to the island of Procida. Although winds were moderate at 15 km, Fosca effortlessly did 6 knots under a full genoa and main. The busy port shoreline of Naples and its suburban cities gradually receded, as did the looming presence of Mt Vesuvius.



Breakfast, Italian-style, with Enzo at a local coffee bar

Only 3 square kilometers, Procida is the smallest of the three islands in the Bay of Naples and is the least affected by tourism. By 15:00 hours, we made port at the Marine di Sancio Cattolico on the north side of the island. Sancio Cattolico has origins from the 10th century after Saracen pirates landed. It also boasts a famous tradition of sea captains and the Royal Nautical School which was ratified in the 19th century. With still time in the day for exploration, a few of us hiked from the marina side over to the village of Marina Corricella on the opposite shore. The Spanish reigned in this



Sailing in the midst of Mt Vesuvius

community during the 16th century. Procida is recognized for unique style of colourful architecture build upon tufa rock. Having the chance to walk through residential areas provided a glimpse of topical gardens of amaryllis, orange blossoms and other beautiful and fragrant flora. After a short and exciting ride to the acropolis in a “Mr. Bean-type” taxi we arrived at the old town of Terra Murata. The predominating feature of this town is the Benedictine Abbey of San Michele Arcangelo founded in 1206. However, this site has always

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Three-wheelin’ taxi on the island of Procida

been considered sacred. There is evidence of a religious complex dating to the 5th century and a temple dedicated to Neptune the Agriculturist (the sea god dedicated to the



Seascape vista from the island of Procida

essential elements of Procidian life: fishing and agriculture). The Abbey was built upon the sheer rock cliff on the fortified rise of Terra Murata. Looking over the balcony of the abbey at a 300-foot sheer drop and crashing sea below became even more thrilling when the wind slammed the exit door shut, locking all of us outside for a short while. The island of Procida is connected by a bridge to a smaller island of Vivara, now designated as a nature reserve where recently a late Bronze Age Mycenaean settlement was found.

Our stay on Procida was further enhanced later in the day by the opportunity to meet two seasoned sailors from Haninge, Sweden. Anita and Erik Jonasson are living their retirement dream with an extended voyage. They left Sweden in 2000 and have been sailing ever since. They initially headed south through Europe by accessing the canal system and reached the Mediterranean via the Rhine River, eventually ending up in Turkey. Now on their return voyage home, we were honoured to have them as our dinner guest aboard Fosca. The other bonus of staying on Procida was the lack of docking fees.



Anne, Luigi and Richard with Swedish sailors, Eric and Anita who are on route to Sweden after visiting Turkey.



We departed Procida late in the morning for the island of Ischia. The relatively short distance of 10 nautical miles provided ample time to sail just of the sake of sailing.

Enjoying a good sail at 7+ knots with reefed jib and full main. Winds were up to 20 knots.



We enjoyed lunch on the hook off of the coast of Ischia Ponte under the shadow of Castello Aragonese, a 12th century Angevin cathedral built on a small island with a high rocky preface. The island is joined to Ischia by an ancient causeway built in 1438. Founded by Greek traders in the 8th century, invaded by the Saracens, Aragonese, French and Austrians (to name a few), this island later became a favourite with the Bourbon royalty and artists of every distinction.

(left) The SBYC club burgee, hailed by Commodore Morgantini, makes it all the way to Castello Aragonese off the island of Ischia.

We pulled into the port of Casamicciola Terme at 18:00 hours and stern-tied to the main dock along side some serious cruising vessels from around the world. Ischia is definitely more upscale than Procida and renowned for its volcanic hot springs, thermal baths and spas. The nice shops and well-maintained infrastructure all come with a cost: 140 Euros to dock both boats for one night (Yikes! That's about \$230.00 CAN)



Raffaella and Luigi stocking up on provisions: Limoncello!

The island of Capri became our next destination. We headed out for this 18-nautical mile trip in good time, but no wind was to be had despite our most valiant attempts to sail. Both boats motored in the swell



left over from Thursday's good breeze. The upside to no wind was that Enzo cooked his favorite lunch of pasta and pomodoro! (those great little Neapolitan tomatoes, penne, olive oil, salt and parsley). From a distance, we were hailed by a pod of porpoise; the only sea life that we had the chance to see along this journey.

Roger and Mona on board the Beneteau 39, "Blue Too"

Capri is the largest of the three islands; at 57 square km, it is 10 square km larger than Ischia. It is also certainly the most highly developed. Making port at Marine Grande only at 14:00 hours provide time to explore during the day which was good since there



A view of Marine Grande and the island of Capri from the top of the Phoenician Steps

were many interesting things to see. The Marine Grande is a busy place with lots of activity - huge volumes of tourists arriving and leaving on constant ferries and the Rolex IMS Sailing Cup which was setting up for a week of sailing beginning the day after our departure. A funicular railway connects Marine Grande up a steep hill to the town of Capri. Another destination was to hike the ancient 700 Phoenician Steps up the cliff to another hilltop town of Anicapri. Capri also boasts a noble history with such famous residents as the Roman Emperors, Octavian Augustus and his successor, Tiberus. Tiberus actually ruled Rome

from here later in his life. As well, a host of artists resided here including the famous Swedish physician, Axel Munthe, singer Gracie Fields, and author Oscar Wilde. The island was also a point of destination for the Grand Tour. The Grand Tour was a method for 18th century nobles and the very wealthy to complete their education with a period of European travel. The objective was to learn about politics, culture and the art of neighbouring countries. Italy was a main destination due to its heritage of ancient Roman monuments. It was particularly popular with the British who admired antiquity and the culture of the ancients. Our stay on Capri was highlighted by an outstanding display of fireworks that night in celebration of the patron holiday, St Stephen's Day. We departed at 14:00 hours out into a sea of light winds and enjoyed an easy 14-nautical mile journey past the coast of Sorrento on route to Torre Annunziata. We arrived at our final destination by 17:30.



Anne sailing off the shore of Capri

Making arrangements to sail overseas is perhaps more accessible than you might initially think.

With exception to the exorbitant mooring fees at some ports, the cost is comparable to chartering on the West Coast. The Internet has made obtaining information and contact very accessible. Booking agents connect Internet shoppers with independent boat owners and small charter companies. While you take your chances when sharing close quarters with any boat that comes along with a skipper and crew, the people we encountered went out of their way to make our experience more manageable: transfer services from the train and to hotels, storing excess travel luggage, pre-and-post boarding at no extra charge and boat provisioning so that we could get off of the dock a lot sooner. Most of all, this experience has provided us with an opportunity not accessible to many travelers: exposure to the culture and customs of the land from a vantage point of the sea.