

## JENNY AND DAVE PAKES WINDJAMMER III CRUISING THE MED IN 2013

Dear RANSA Members,

Yes, I know it's June 2014 but this is the first opportunity we've had to sit, back, relax and write about our cruising around the Med, Jun to Oct 2013. Life back home is just too busy and so, if nothing else, in a few month's time we should be telling you about this year's exploits.

The Schengen Agreement, once again, largely drove how and where we would visit. Very briefly, we sailed and motored our way from one end of the Med, Portugal (yes, I know, it's not actually in the Med), through Schengen territory, to Turkey. The Schengen Agreement simply means that Aussies, Yanks, Canadians, etc are only allowed in Schengen countries (read most of the EU) for a total of three months and then have to leave for three months before being allowed to return. A real bummer when we are only overseas for six months.



Windjammer as 'left marker', Keci Buku, Turkey

So, we splashed and then departed Lagos, Portugal fairly rapidly (for us) two weeks after arrival in May and hoofed it directly to Gibraltar, where we found both marinas full and no vacancies available in the near term. Next door in sunny Spain is a big modern marina that had plenty of room so there we waited for our friends Kath and John to join us. A few days later we were on our way.

After a brief visit to Morocco (leaving WJ3 at Restingar Smir Marina to visit the delightful Chefchaouen), we followed the Spanish coast north

eastwards, managing to find a nice spot to stop each night – mostly in marinas as there are few decent anchorages, until about level with Ibiza with plans to cross from here. At Altea, one of our friendly neighbours lent us his car for the day, allowing us to venture north to explore Valencia. Again, we were impressed by the sites in another historical Spanish city.

We had heard so much about the Balearics and weren't disappointed as we 'gunkholed' our way through Ibiza and Mallorca (Spanish). Wind was generally light so we mostly motored or motor-sailed. Anchorages were quite busy but we (almost always) found room, and where we didn't, the next one was close by and turned out to be a better spot anyway. The water was clean and clear, heaps of restaurants and bars, holding good and the scenery stunning. We were a bit out of place in Ibiza, a crazy crowded holiday centre for young tourists; obviously well over 30, wearing conservative clothes of shorts and tee shirts, and not staying up all night at bars and discos. Nice scenery though!



After a scenic trip to Soller (Majorca) on a vintage train, John and Kath left for home and Jenny and I hot-footed directly across to the island of Sardinia (Italy), by-passing expensive Manorca. Oristano, Sardinia was a marked contrast with the Balearics – hardly any tourists and so relatively quiet. Lovely country scenery, historical towns and friendly people.

We next followed along the northern and scenic coast of Sicily with only a few stops; one anchorage memorably at the foot of a steaming volcano. The weather was very kind to us. Negotiating the narrow straits of Messina (only about a mile or so wide at its narrowest) that separate Sicily and Italy was not as hair-raising as the pilot books can make it appear. We had decided that the rest of Italy would have to wait for another year and headed directly for Greece.

After 3 nights at sea, our port of arrival was at Pylos, on the western side of the Peloponnese, where an English fleet in Oct 1827 smashed a Turkish fleet and gained for Greece its independence. We had to obtain a Greek Cruising Permit and, although not difficult, the process

was in marked contrast with our experiences in Portugal, Spain and Italy where you don't have to do anything (except get passports stamped on arrival in Portugal).

Our cruising so far and for the next few days was typically balmy and most pleasant. That changed when we reached the Aegean Sea (between Greece and Turkey) where a wind system, the Meltemi, blows at around 20-30 knots from the north each day in the summer season. Of course, this was all the time that we were crossing to Turkey and while cruising there too. I might add that the wind's direction can vary quite a bit depending on what side of an island you are following at a particular time. Further, when anchored or sailing (too) close to an island you often experience strong catabatic winds. Not pleasant.

The simple solution is to take your time crossing the Aegean but we did not have that luxury as our Schengen time was running out. We learnt of some cruisers being stuck in anchorages for something like 10 days before they felt comfortable enough with the weather to continue on with their journeys. Although we were able to often anchor comfortably at night we finally decided to bite the bullet and just go for it. After a few days of unpleasant sailing and motoring (and a bit of sea-sickness for one of us), we were very pleased to arrive in Bodrum, Turkey, with about three days to spare in our Schengen timeframe. We spent five days safely trussed up, luxuriating in an expensive marina. Must be getting old.

Checking-in to Turkey is so complex that most cruisers use an agent to process the paperwork and obtain the various clearances – easy enough but by far the most expensive we have experienced.

We still had two months in Turkey before flying home and divided that equally between making our way south to, and around, Marmaris where we put the boat away, and taking a package tour around the western half of Turkey. Like Greece, Turkey in Sep and Oct is very busy, charter boats and gulleys a go-go, but stunning scenery and lots of historical stuff to see.



Tomb of Amyntas 350 BC, Fethiye, Turkey

All in all, a great year's cruising and highly recommended to anyone thinking of going there.

This year (2014) we are making our way north along the Turkish coast and have just arrived Ayvalik, opposite the Greek island of Lesbos where we can check out, and in, respectively. Hopefully we are well enough north so that our sailing west across the Aegean Sea will be a much more pleasant experience with the Meltemi on our beam or quarter. The wind gods have been very kind to us so far this year due to it being early in the summer season. Anyway, plenty of time to make our way through numerous Greek islands before traversing the Corinth Canal and heading north to Croatia and Venice, stopping along the way of course.

Anyone wanting to read about our trip or view photos from our time away this year and in the past will find them posted on our blog site at <http://windjammer3.blogspot.com> .

To all RANSA members, we wish you all the very best for the remainder of 2014 and fair winds.

Jenny & Dave