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DENMARK: THE ARCHIPELAGO OF LARGE AND SMALL, OFTEN UNINHABITED, ISLANDS

WE HAD BEEN WANTING TO TAKE TO THE SEA FOR A WHILE. IN MARCH 2012 WE TOOK DELIVERY OF OUR GRAND STURDY 430 MARK II. WITH TWO ENGINES AND STABILISERS, THE RIETVAER WAS READY TO GO TO SEA. WE DECIDED TO TAKE A TRIP TO DENMARK. WE SET OFF WITH OUR TWO DOGS FROM THE LINSSEN BOATYARD ON 29 JUNE.

We sailed up the Rhine and spent three weeks crossing Germany. The German canals are good to sail. Commercial shipping is considerate to pleasure boats and travels at a maximum of 15 km per hour. Overnight accommodation is easy to find along the route in marinas and at commercial and other quays. The applicable rules are enforced by the river police.

The Elbe-Seiten Canal has two engineering structures, including Uelzen lock with a 23 m drop. The floating bollards mean that you can relax as you pass through the

lock. The *Schiffshebewerk Scharnebeck* (Lüneburg) is a boat lift that spans 38 m. Impressive to look at and easy to negotiate – you sail into the trough, secure your boat and enjoy the view from the platform while you are lowered to the bottom within 20 minutes.

UP THE ELBE

Before you sail up this rain-fed river, it's a good idea to check the weather forecasts in Germany and the Czech Republic. In the event of heavy rainfall, the cross current can reach 10 km in a few days. We had 3 km of cross cur-

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rent, which made a pleasant change from the canals. The landscape is splendid. The many bends and shallows mean that you have to stay on the alert. The navigable channel is indicated on the shore. Already we were seeing the Danish flag flying more often. We moored at the marina in Lauenburg, a historic bargees' town with timber-frame houses and the Elbe Shipping Museum.

We continued our journey along the Elbe-Lübeck Canal through the hilly, wooded countryside of the Duchy of Lauenburg and the Lauenburg Lakes Nature Park. This 62 km canal was dug around 1900 to transport salt between Uelzen and Lübeck and has six locks. Here, you have to travel in convoy at a maximum speed of 10 km per hour. We intended to spend the night at the WSV Mölln marina. But the captain made a blunder! We moored not very prettily at the outer jetty. The current pushed us towards the jetty, which had a water tap right at the edge! A large fountain of water was the result. After Jan applied first aid, we came to a reasonable settlement with the harbourmaster about the damage.

Mölln was made famous by the tale of Till Eulenspiegel, a character from Dutch and German folk tradition.

LÜBECK (SEE TITLE PHOTO)

It's a fantastic experience to sail into this old Hanseatic town! We moored at Hansa Marina Neugen, a popular marina right next to the city centre (booking recommended). Lübeck is one large open-air museum, with its historic port, wonderful merchants' houses, warehouses

and churches. It's really worth the trouble to linger a while longer. Close to Hansa Marina is one of the city's most important mediaeval buildings, the *Schiffersgesellschaft* dating from 1535, which contains a lot of history. Since 1868 it has contained a restaurant, visited by tourists from all over the world.

TRAVEMÜNDE

It took us two hours to sail from Lübeck through the winding river estuary to Travemünde, the seaport on the Baltic. Large ferries and sea-going vessels were now passing close by and things were becoming steadily busier. We sailed through the port area into the Baltic and were amazed; ferries, fishing boats, sail and motor yachts and speedboats provided us with some lively company. We turned around again and moored in Yachtclub Fischereihafen, from where you can see the ferries sailing past.

GERMANY'S BALTIC

By this time, we had been under way for exactly three weeks and were ready to sail into the Baltic. The weather was just right for it, 0-5 knot wind and sunny. There is hardly any tide on the Baltic. The water has an average depth, which creates long waves. One aspect you have to take account of is wind direction, because it's not the wind force but the wave height combined with the wind direction that determines whether you have a pleasant trip. We sailed in very windy conditions but inshore, which meant that the wave height wasn't too bad.

Heading for the Baltic





After a fantastic five-hour trip, we moored at the port of Orth on the beautiful German island of Fehmarn. In front of us, the vintage steel sailing ship RYVAR from Flensburg was tying up with the Shanty Freunde Gimte on board who were singing wonderful sea shanties. We enjoyed it!

WE CAN RUN UP THE DANISH FLAG!

The crossing to Denmark takes about five hours. It's important to make the crossing in good weather. You cross the shipping route between Kiel and Scandinavia. To reach the Danish islands safely, you have to stay alert and cross in as straight a line as possible. On our AIS system, we saw the speed at which the ships were travelling. They were sailing a fixed course, which makes things clearer. It was great to see the stately seagoing vessels passing by. As soon as you are among the islands, the Danish South Sea is mainly used for boating and fishing.

THE WEATHER

When the wind blows straight across the sea, it can produce sizeable waves even on the narrowest waterway. During the time that we sailed there, the weather was

very changeable and we witnessed winds ranging from 0 to 40 knots. The weather can change quickly so you can go from good to bad weather, and vice versa, within one hour. One day, we reckoned that the weather changed four times but because we were sheltered by the islands this did not trouble us much.

CRUISING AREA

Consisting of many large and countless small, often uninhabited, islands, the archipelago lives up to the name of Danish South Sea. Pretty coastlines with cliffs, surrounded by beaches and friendly harbours appeared regularly on the horizon. Also special were the fjords where we could regularly see dolphins close at hand. It's a fantastic cruising area where you can travel from harbour to harbour without being held up by bridges and locks.

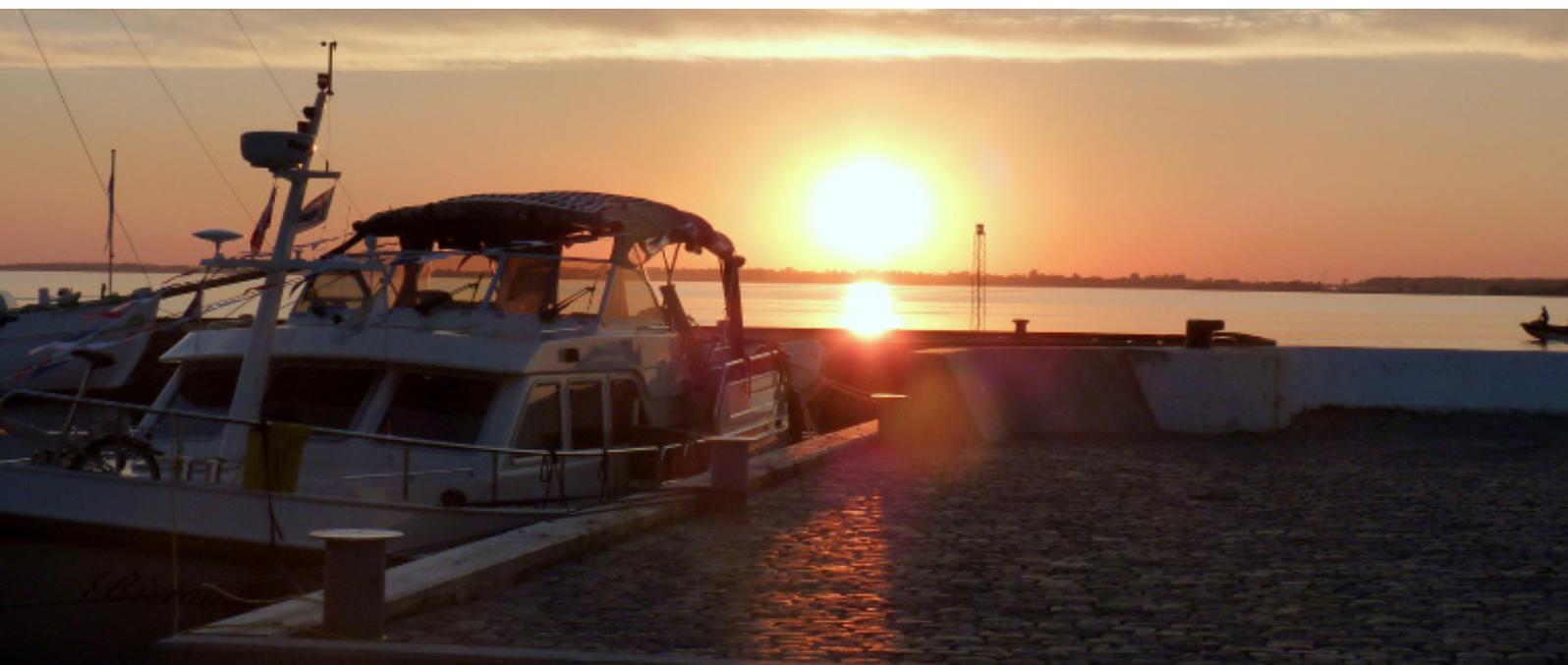
MARINAS

The marinas have good facilities and Internet access. Every marina has the same system: a green sign means vacant and a red sign means occupied. You pay at a machine and receive a sticker/receipt that you stick on your boat and an Internet login code. The harbour dues range from 23 to 24 euro (length 14 metres). Sailboats are in the majority, but there are also motor yachts and speedboats. Apart from huge numbers of Danes, we saw Germans, a few Dutch people and Swedes and Norwegians. In high season, it can be hard to find a mooring in the afternoon. Because sailing times are relatively short, you usually do find a place – provided that you depart on time. Anchoring is another good option.

TO LANGELAND

We were confronted with long waves and strong crosswinds for the first time in the Bay of Kiel. This was no problem with the stabilisers on. We swung slowly into the heavy swell. Because the popular Marstal Marina was

We enjoyed the view, the beautiful weather and a glorious sunset at Rudkøbing.



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full, we continued on to Rudkøbing. A strong wind can cause a lot of cross currents at the harbour entrance but the weather was glorious and we didn't encounter any problems. Because the place was so busy, we moored in the working harbour and the next day moved to the marina with our rear end facing the sea. We enjoyed the view, the beautiful weather and a glorious sunset. Rudkøbing is an old trading town with a bustling town centre and was an ideal place for us to replenish our supplies.

TÅSINGE

A short crossing brought us to the island of Tåsinge, with the charming town of Troense nestling in the hills. There we moored at the outer jetty of Badelaug marina, which still has a traditional harbourmaster. The water was crystal clear and we could see the crabs scuttling across the seabed. There were also very large numbers of jellyfish. Occasionally, speedboats would cause large waves and we were confronted for the first time with rising water levels (20 cm).

This amazing little town has thatched timber-frame houses in yellow, white and red and romantic, rose-filled gardens and orchards. Its links with its shipping past were still clear to see.

FUNEN TO SVENDBORG

Around the corner, on the south bank of the island of Funen is the busy port town of Svendborg. The beautiful marina is situated close to the pleasant shopping centre and the railway station. Svendborg offers every facility and has a number of museums.

FUNEN TO FÅBORG

When we set off with Fåborg as our destination, it was cloudy and misty and later started to rain. We had our head to the wind with strong gusts of up to 17 knots. Both marinas were full. We eventually moored at the wooden storm defence of the second marina. When the weather cleared up towards evening, we saw a charming landscape of houses, yellow cornfields and forest appear. The next morning we moved to the friendly commercial harbour. Further on, ferries were departing for small off-shore islands. Fåborg has the flair of a 19th-century trading town. It is a fortress town with a town gate, courtyards and timber-frame buildings. The harbour is popular among sailors and charterers. You can buy fresh fish from the former smokehouse in the industrial port next door. In Fåborg we said goodbye to a group of friendly Danes who had been travelling with us for two weeks. They gave us some handy tips about Denmark. It was nice to meet people on our travels! For instance, we met Marjolein and Jo Dohmen of the Dutch Water Sport Association in Minden and Joke and Dick Peek – also cruising on their Linssen yacht – in Heidanger.

We sailed on to Assens Marina, a modern marina right next to the beach, with all the usual facilities, including a restaurant. Assens is a very old trading port (1231) with beautiful narrow streets, merchants' houses and courtyards. Tip: the Willemoesgårdens Mindestuer local history museum is worth a visit. A supermarket and the town centre are within walking distance. We saw dolphins just outside the marina!



JUTLAND TO SØNDERBORG

The clear weather allowed us a great view of Funen's yellow fields and green hills, some of them 125 m high. We sailed into Alsford and reached the picturesque port of Sønderborg. We moored at the friendly town quay. A little further on was an ice cream parlour. Danes are crazy about ice cream. Young and old alike were queuing up to buy an often mega-sized ice cream. We looked out on to the town's biggest attraction, the castle which was built in 1170 on the orders of Valdemar I as a coastal defence to fend off attacks by the Wends. Originally, it was nothing more than a solid, fortified tower but has undergone a transformation into a renaissance castle over the centuries. After 1864 it was used as a barracks and later as a museum. Tips: take a walk by the sea, visit the castle and stroll through the old town centre.

RETURN TO GERMANY

We left Sønderborg – and Denmark – with a sense of sadness. We had spent three glorious weeks there, which we enjoyed to the full. The sea lock at Kiel and a further three hours sailing to Rendsburg made it a long trip. We sailed inshore a lot of the time. The wind grew stronger and the waves higher when we passed the estuaries of the Flensberger and Eckern Fjords but the yacht coped well.

BAY OF KIEL TO KIEL CANAL

The Bay of Kiel is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world. Large sea-going vessels and cruise liners sail continuously from the North Sea to the Baltic and vice versa. At Kiel, ships are guided into the Kiel Canal by pilots. We heard on our VHF set how sea captains kept in contact with each other to ensure that their vessels passed safely through the locks into the canal. The speed of these giants of the sea was 10-14 km per hour but the canal is 160 m wide so that caused us little trouble. The pilots en-

sure safety and keep an eye out for pleasure craft. Once again, our AIS transmitter and receiver came in handy. The Kiel Canal is 100 km long and takes two days to sail through. Each year, 19,000 pleasure boats sail through the canal, so you're not alone!

KIEL SEA LOCK

Sea-going vessels enter first in accordance with a fixed protocol. When they have been secured and the propellers switched off, pleasure craft are allowed to enter in order of arrival. We spent two hours bobbing up and down until it was our turn. Pleasure craft have priority over commercial shipping when leaving the lock. It's no easy task to moor in this lock. You have to get off the boat to tie up on rings on the extremely slippery floating jetty (even the rubber is slippery!). We reported in to the German lock keeper via the lock stairway.

ELBE ESTUARY TO CUXHAVEN

At Brunsbüttel, we passed through the sea lock into the Elbe. You have to keep a close eye on the weather reports for the crossing to Cuxhaven. Jan had been talking to experienced sea dogs about this for weeks. The time seemed right – the water was smooth and the weather almost completely calm. However, 3 km before Cuxhaven, the north-westerly wind quickly rose to 25-33 knots. As we were sailing with the current and against the wind, this produced heavy breakers. Although the RIETVAER was obviously able to cope, we didn't like it! Fortunately, the marina was close at hand and the waves died down again as soon as we were inside. While the wind was howling, we recovered from our adventure in the convivial harbour restaurant of Cuxhaven Sailing Club.

GERMAN BIGHT

The German Bight is the south-eastern part of the North

The Bay of Kiel is one of the busiest shipping routes in the world.

The car transporter Kess passing the RIETVAER in the Kiel Canal.



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Sea, bounded by Dutch and German Wadden Islands to the south, Danish Jutland to the east and the Dogger Bank to the north. The busy shipping route between the mouth of the Elbe and the Straits of Dover runs along its southern edge. In the German Bight you have to cope with depressions arriving from Iceland which cause the wind to push the waves up the North Sea.

On our departure, we sailed with the current. Our calculations seemed to be right, because when we sailed into the bend of the Weser Estuary the tide turned and we had the current with us. The trip covered 100 km and took us across the shipping line of the Elbe Estuary, past the island of Scharhorn and then through the Wadden Sea Region of the old Weser, where we called in at Bremerhaven.

Bremerhaven is one of Germany's oldest cities and has a fabulous new city centre, where Loyd Marina is also located. In a park-like landscape you will find the open-air shipping museum, architecturally significant buildings, a zoo, shopping centres and restaurants and a glorious view of the Weser. Old and new architectural styles are combined in a tasteful way. It's worth the trouble to linger a while longer!

We left at 5.00 am on 13 August to take advantage of the rising tide. Bremerhaven's skyline in the morning sunlight was a breathtakingly beautiful sight. We sailed 16 km upstream to Bremen and, as an added bonus, saw a seal on a beach near Hunte.

We continued our journey through Germany and part of the Netherlands and on 28 August the RIETVAER arrived safely in our home port of Sloten. How we enjoyed this trip, sailing on the sea, Denmark and its friendly people.

THE ROUTE

Netherlands: Maasbracht, Roermond, Venlo

Germany: Wesel, Dorsten, Münster, Recke, Minden, Peine, Heidanger, Launeburg, Schiffshebewerk Scharnebeck, Mölln, Lübeck, Travemünde, Fehmarn - Hafen Orth

Denmark: Langeland (Rudkøbing), Funen (Troense, Bådelaug, Svendborg, Faaborg, Assens), Jutland (Kolding, Sønderborg)

Germany: Rendsburg, Brunsbüttel, Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Bremen, Oldenburg, Leer

Netherlands: Delfzijl, Groningen, Kootsterille, Sloten

Books used for this trip:

Vom Rhein zur Nord- und Ostsee – Manfred Fenzl – Edition Maritim

Vaarwijzer: Noord Duitse Binnenwateren – Hollandia

Vaarwijzer: Scandinavië en de Oostzee - Hollandia

Journey details:

Distance travelled: 833 km

Sailing days: 33

Days in port: 29

Engine operating hours: 172

Diesel consumption: 1,239 litres



THE AUTHORS

Jan Brummel and Trudie Rutten are the enthusiastic owners of the RIETVAER.

The website www.hondenaanboord.nl contains the complete logbook for this trip, as well as information about sailing your Linssen yacht at sea and practical tips for your journey.

For seafaring dog lovers, it also contains interesting information on sailing with dogs.

