

In the high North

CRUISING THE BALTIC

with Linszen yachts

Text and photographs by Martin Stratmann

Lübeck businessman and lighting designer Martin Stratmann is living his dreams, along with his wife Dagmar and many friends and guests. This is also a portrait of a wonderful landscape, a journey along the west coast of the Baltic and the neighbouring inland cruising areas.





SPECIAL LBH REPORT NORTHERN GERMANY





We had always had the Linssen bug and the urge to get on to the water without getting wet.

We already had our first small motor boat before we found our house right on the river Trave at the edge of Lübeck's old town, which had taken three years to renovate and we finally bought in May 1994. Even before we moved into the house, we had acquired a labour-intensive powered sailplane (oak on oak) as well, as we had had enough of water. When I celebrated my fiftieth birthday in January 2005 and some friends congratulated me on my forty-fifth, I knew that it wasn't too late.

Shortly before, Linssen had presented a new, smaller yacht, a Grand Sturdy 29.9. In September 2005, my wife and I drove to the IJmuiden Boat Show. We were mightily impressed and we knew there and then that that was the boat for us. Without having seen an AC version, we ordered our first Linssen at the Hanseboot Boat Show in Hamburg in November. We then had to wait until April 2007 for hull number 2716, so there was enough time to prepare for project "Baltic Charter" and also find a suitable name for this jewel of a boat.

SENTO

Sento (Italian for „I feel“) is a very successful light for Stratmann, a luminaire head, now in LED, which has been a much covered product for over 10 years. What could be more obvious than to name a yacht with the same attributes after a designer luminaire?

After a few meetings with a highly creative friend, the future business division was named "mobiliar club + charter". This linked the name of the Stratmanns' lighting business "mobiliar licht + raum" to the new project and "SENTO" to a genuine movable property.

Known as Lübeck's most beautiful daughter, Travemünde is where the Baltic Sea begins, giving free access to Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. In early summer, this is where we enjoy the long hours of sunlight and the "white nights". It takes two hours to reach Travemünde by boat from Lübeck.

Departing from Travemünde, the tours follow the Schleswig-Holstein or Mecklenburg Baltic coastline. The "Around Holstein" tour is very popular. For this tour, it's advisable to schedule two weeks. In the first week you can relax and enjoy sailing the 70 nautical miles on the Baltic as far as Kielerförde.

THE DANISH SOUTH SEA

The Danish South Sea can only be reached directly from Travemünde by making a long day trip of it. You won't find the "Danish South Sea" marked on any navigation chart. The description refers to the islands south of Fünen island and east of Langeland island. It takes five hours sailing to reach the Schleswig-Holstein island of Fehmarn between Travemünde and Denmark. Depending on weather conditions, the tour passes to the east of Fehmarn, almost following the bird migration route to the islands of Lolland and Falster.

After this section of the trip lasting about three or four hours, you can continue travelling north through the very sheltered Gulborgsund. South of the main Danish island of Seeland, the skipper then has the option of sailing either east to the island of Møn and into the Øresund or westwards to Langeland, Fünen and into the popular Danish South Sea.

POLAND

Sailing the SENTO to Poland from Lübeck via Hanover, Bremen, the North Sea, Hamburg and Kiel. Our smallest yacht, the SENTO has had Neuhof Marina as its port of

departure since summer 2013. After an extraordinary journey across northern Germany, the SENTO found its new home port there, opposite the island of Rügen in the Strelasund at the gates of the magnificent Hanseatic city of Stralsund. The SENTO had by then acquired two big sisters, the "Tante Stördi" and the "Missis Stördi" and it sometimes got a bit cramped in our boathouse with three yachts. We also wanted to cover our very large cruising area from other ports as well as Lübeck. The farewell tour to the east was made with alternating crews, initially to the south and further west as far as the Weser and back to Lübeck via the Elbe and Hamburg. Other crews followed and sailed the SENTO along the Schleswig-Holstein Baltic coast up as far as the Schlei. The trip continued via the Kiel Canal (the world's busiest artificial waterway), crossing the country towards

the Elbe and Hamburg, from where it took only two or three days more to reach Lübeck.

During this season, the yacht was in continuous use and it was back on the Baltic straightaway, heading to the Elbe as far as Cuxhaven and out into the North Sea. The SENTO returned to Lübeck undamaged and once again took the "Around Holstein" tour.

It was not until early August that the SENTO moored at our landing for the last time. A crew from Frankfurt had chartered the yacht for the whole of August and sailed along the Mecklenburg Baltic coast into the Oder lagoon. After rounding the island of Usedom and sailing on the Peene, the lagoon and the coastal waters, the SENTO finally reached its new home port "Neuhof Marina".

SWEDEN

A summer in Sweden, cruising with the "Tante Stördi".

"As far north as you like, but please don't leave the Baltic". The agreement with my charter guest from Alberta (Canada) was that specific. The family, who had emigrated to Canada, wanted to sail along the Swedish Baltic coast to visit places where they had previously spent many summers cruising on their own sailing yacht.

The destination was Oxelösund, about 120 km south west of Stockholm. Our "Tante Stördi" arrived in the marina at Oxelösund in mid-June, after a three-week trip and about 400 nautical miles. It took us only 11 hours by car to get there and after spending a night all together on board, we drove our previous crew to the airport and then stayed a week on board ourselves.





The destination of this summer trip was the legendary Göta Canal, Sweden's blue ribbon. The previous autumn a "crew chain" had been formed for a total of four canal trips, plus a crew each for the outward and return tour.

Until the first canal crew arrived, we made a week-long round trip to explore the Stockholm skerries, the urban area and, further up, the gigantic Lake Mälaren.

By the end of June, the first canal crew was crossing the Baltic to Lake Vänern. The yacht sailed through the canal a total of four times.

The summers in Sweden are busy but the season ends as early as the second half of August. As from 20 August, free travel on the canal is over. Without the many seasonal workers, you can only travel in convoy out of season, having called in advance.

On 21 August, we left the canal and sailed south along the Baltic coast as we had to see the first jetties were being dismantled and prepared for

winter. We did not want to return via Gothenburg that summer as the Baltic is calmer and much milder.

From lagoons and inlets to Poland Nowhere is the German Baltic coast more sheltered and varied than in the region around Stralsund. The cruising areas of the Fischland-Darss peninsula situated to the west, south and east of Rügen and the islands of Hiddensee and Usedom have one thing in common: endless white sandy beaches on the open sea side and sheltered harbours on the landward side.

You can easily walk or cycle across these islands, which are very narrow in places, to enjoy the pure sea air on the other side of the island. Everywhere, we were spoilt with local dishes of freshly grilled or smoked sea fish. The sea buckthorn is a particular speciality of the coastal region. The fruits of this plant which grows on dunes and in coastal areas have a particularly high Vitamin C content and are harvested

for all kinds of delicacies.

The sheltered backwaters of this Baltic Sea region are known as lagoons, coastal inlets or sounds.

These smooth waters make it easy to forget that they are part of an inland sea, the Baltic.

The Western Pomerania Lagoon Area National Park is the main wintering area for waterfowl from all over the Baltic Sea region. The Darss-Zingst-Bodden chain and the lagoons west of Rügen are part of this interconnected region.

The National Park is especially well known for its flocks of cranes. The highlight of the year is autumn: From September to November, some 60,000 cranes pass through, remaining for several weeks.

The presence of the cranes and the Baltic water, which is still warm in autumn, extends the charter season until well into October, providing guests with a wealth of experiences.



LÜBECK, STRALSUND AND UECKERMÜNDE

Linsen yachts are provided for the open sea from the three ports of departure, Lübeck, Stralsund and Ueckermünde. The construction and equipment of these yachts make it possible to sail beyond the coastal three-mile zone.

The island of Bornholm and the south coast of Sweden are within easy reach of Ueckermünde or Stralsund.

With the smaller yachts you can of course sail around the German and Polish islands in the Baltic and also tour the neighbouring inland cruising areas. The Baltic yachts have frequently made the big round trip via the Oder and Elbe through the inland areas and back to the Baltic. Chartered sea-going yachts can also sail on inland waterways but inland yachts are not allowed on the sea. No matter where they go, the host country flags of Denmark, Poland and Sweden are on board.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE CRUISING AREA:

ARE THE YACHTS ALLOWED ON TO THE BALTIC?

Yes, of course. There are two categories, charter yachts for coastal sailing (3 nautical miles) and for the open sea (30 nautical miles).

SO WHERE CAN I SAIL TO?

Round trips are available from all the ports of departure, some of them involving the inland cruising areas.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED?

Sea-going yachts must be fitted with a radio, otherwise it is sufficient to hold a SEE sport boat licence.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME FOR SAILING?

The best time is high summer with the short nights. The warm water of the Baltic makes for relatively mild days in autumn (60,000 cranes can't be wrong).



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