ICOYC Summer cruise 2014 around Elba – a splendid experience

After the successful ICOYC Summer cruise 2013 – organized by the NRV – the International Council of Yacht Clubs this year had asked Yacht Club Italiano in Genoa, to organize an interesting cruise in the Mediterranen for members of the ICOYC Clubs.

The motto was: once around the island of Elba with a little side trip to the northern tip of Corsica. So, on Saturday, June 21, 2014, ten yachts and their crews gathered in Portoferraio on the island of Elba to embark on this trip the next day. Just like last year, the participants came from many countries from all over the world, namely from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and the United States. Out of a total of 51 participants 20 people had already been part of last year’s cruise through the southern Danish isles organized by the NRV.

Prior to setting sail on Sunday morning, June 22, 2014, John McNeill – the Council’s President – jointly with Carlo de Thierry as the representative of Yacht Club Italiano – welcomed all participants in the cruise on the pier at Portoferraio.
No cruise can get underway without a nice mutual dinner party the night before allowing the participants to get to know each other. Since a large number of those present knew each other from last year already this procedure was no big deal at all. And it showed once again how open-minded, cosmopolitan and generally interested the participants in the cruise were.

Despite of a time wise rather lengthy and seemingly endless seven course meal accompanied by plenty of wine, beer and other „spirited“ drinks the participants nevertheless enjoyed themselves in good company. Many conversations circled around the upcoming cruise in pleasant expectation.
After leaving Portoferraio on Sunday morning, June 22, 2014 the first destination en route was the small island of Capraia located about 28 nautical miles North West of Elba. Well organized by the harbor master’s assistants berthing “stern to pier” turned out to be quite easy. A tour agent had organized berthing for the yachts in the name of Yacht Club Italiano.

The island of Capraia itself is of volcanic origin and therefore mostly rocky. It features lots of unspoilt nature and in parts quite spectacular vistas of the surrounding Mediterranean. After breakfast the next day sails were set and the cruise continued in direction of the small port of Macinaggio on Cape Corse in France. With only 18 nautical miles to cover this was a comparatively short leg and close by destination which was reached rather fast due to perfect wind conditions.
The next day – Tuesday, June 24, 2014 – strong winds prevented the yachts from leaving port and it was decided to stay another night in Macinaggio. This provided us with an opportunity to explore the northern tip of Corsica by local taxi. The friendly and pleasant driver showed our crew some very nice spots of his home island’s surprisingly green countryside despite of the mostly rather rocky terrain.

After intensive deliberation amongst the skippers and by incorporating YCI member Carlo de Thierry’s knowledge of the local conditions the planned cruise itinerary was changed. Due to continuing strong winds from the South it was decided to abandon the originally planned circumnavigation of the island of Elba. The port of Marina di Campo located on the south coast of the island would have offered only little to no protection at all against the waves rolling in from the South. So, the trip could nevertheless continue on Wednesday, June 25, 2014. By using the good sailing breeze from behind and despite of threatening clouds overhead it turned out to be a rather fast albeit partly rough and wet passage towards once again the North coast of Elba.

The alternative port of Marciano Marina recommended by Carlo de Thierry turned out to be a pleasant little town with a good marina and acceptable sanitary facilities. It has also got a good number of nice little shops and some quite good restaurants well accepted by the boat crews.
On Thursday, June 26, 2014 the fleet passed Portoferraio – our port of origin – on the north coast of the island in easterly direction. That day’s destination was Porto Azzurro, a small port on the east coast of Elba. This by the way also was the day on which the German national soccer team was to play against the United States team in the 2014 Soccer World Championship ongoing at that time. Several of the German participants in the cruise by all means wanted to follow the match on TV. Therefore, it was NRV member Walter Gross-Fengels who volunteered to find a suitable restaurant or pub where we could have a good meal and at the same time watch the game. He did not only succeed in finding a suitable place, but what was even better he was also able to convince the patron to have the match shown on his TV set in German language broadcast by ZDF (second channel of German TV). This fact finally made our day and everyone was more than happy to see the German team win “one-nil”.
Porto Azzuro itself is a nice little town completely geared to tourism and to serve the many holiday makers with a large variety of small shops and pleasant restaurants catering to most every taste.

The town, however, also accommodates yet another kind of „holiday makers“ as well, namely the inmates of the local prison serving their terms in the fortress „San Giacomo di Longone“. It was for this reason when in 1947 the town decided to rename itself into Porto Azzurro from its earlier name Porto Longone. This was supposed to detract potential future tourists from the prison of same name. On the following day, Friday, June 27, 2014 we embarked on the last leg of the cruise in direction of Portoferraio where it was time to say good bye.

Unfortunately we could not make use of the tables originally reserved in a nice restaurant for our „Farewell Dinner“ since in the meantime the whole restaurant had been reserved completely by a group of swank Russians forcing our group to abandon the planned mutual dinner party.

This by no means posed any problem to us at all. We just organized our own “Farewell Party” on bard the yachts moored next to each another on the pier at Portoferraio. We used whatever victuals and beverages from the yachts’ provisions were available to us. Perhaps this was an even better solution than a formal dinner party in that greedy restaurant. This solution in any case turned out to be a lot more cheerful and easy which last but not least boosted morale a great deal.
On Saturday, June 28, 2014 the party spit and participants departed individually to a variety of destinations many of which were in Italy but also to places elsewhere. All in all it was a wonderful cruise and a very nice experience.

The next ICOYC cruise will follow the ICOYC Commodores’ Forum in Auckland / NEW ZEALAND scheduled for February 17 -20, 2015. The sailing area will be the Hauraki Gulf just off the coast in Auckland. The hosts for both the Forum as well as the cruise will be the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron. For further information about participation in the post Forum cruise please contact:

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