

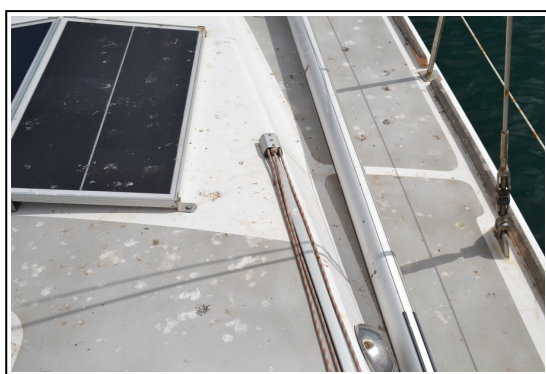


5. Back in Las Palmas 2015



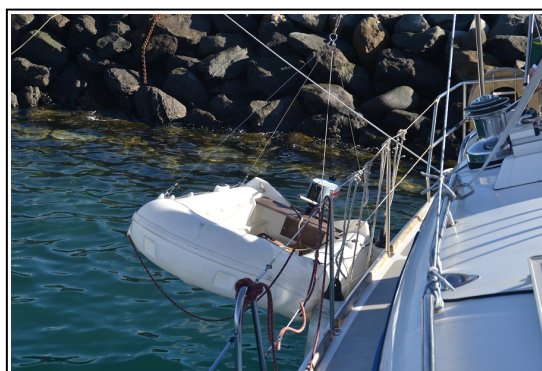
by Johan Kjellander 2015

This year we returned to Las Palmas early in october. Everything was fine with Bird of Passage except for one thing !



Seagulls. It turned out that a seagull had found a favourite place on a disc shaped TV-antenna in the top of our neighbours mast. The bird came there every afternoon and digested what it had found to eat during the day. The remains rained down in the northerly wind to settle on the fore deck of Bird of Passage.

The problem was solved after some time by the fact that we had to move the boat out of the marina to give place for a boat in the ARC-race. When we moved back by the end of November our neighbour glued sharp needles on the top his TV-antenna so it was no longer attractive to gulls, and this seemed to work.



During the ARC race we got a mooring at Playa Caravaneras, just outside the marina. No water, no electricity and the dinghy to get ashore. Not as comfortable as we were used to, but a good opportunity to try our new bigger solar panels. We now have 7 panels with a total power of 500 Watts. We stayed on the mooring for 24 days and were never out of electricity in

spite of a low November sun, cloudy skies, the fridge running at all times and the two of us using our computers several hours every day.

Handling the dinghy becomes an issue when you have no land contact. If you leave it in the water when not used, the bottom will soon be overgrown with barnacles. In some places there is also a risk the dinghy might get stolen. Better to take it up on deck but this can be tiresome. A good compromise is to haul it out of the water and let it hang along the topside of your boat. I bought some 3 mm stainless steel wire and made a 4-armed lifting device that I attached to a line from the end of the boom up to the top of the mast and down to a winch. This worked really nice. With the dinghy hauled up you could also load and unload bags with food or waste and you could comfortably fill the outboard with gasoline.



Playa Caravaneras is not only used for mooring, it is also a nice sandy beach right in the middle of Las Palmas. A lot of locals come here on their free time for swimming and playing.



So did we. The water temperature in November was around 22 degrees. It was nice to take a bath in the after noon when the sun was a little too warm.



The ARC race is a big happening involving more than 300 boats. The last week before the start is full of arrangements for the participating crews. One is a demonstration of a sea rescue operation with a helicopter. It was interesting to see that the Spanish still use the old legendary Sikorsky Sea King, originally designed in the 1950:s and taken out of production during the 1970:s !

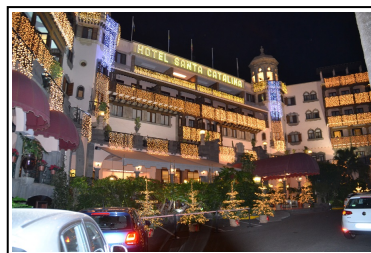
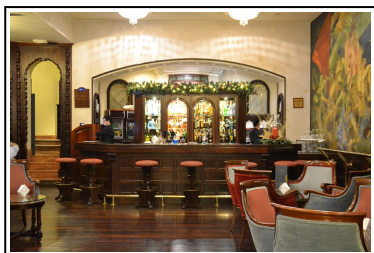


Hundreds of boats leaving Las Palmas at the same time to cross the Atlantic is a spectacular show. First they leave the marina, one by one, accompanied to the sound of a brass orchestra outside the marina office. Thousands of people on the piers to wave goodbye and the finally when all boats are out, the start. All boats have satellite tracking devices so you can follow them on the Internet. After the start only sign left is the garbage from all the boats.



During the time on the mooring we finished some jobs on the boat that had been waiting. One was sea berths (cloth side protections to prevent people from falling out during heeling). Another was to finish the area around the

navigation table with steps, adjustable chair etc. After 24 days on the mooring we moved back into the marina. Most of the preparations for the Atlantic crossing were now finished but we had 6 weeks left to enjoy Gran Canaria before we left.



Las Palmas is full of beautiful buildings. One is the famous Hotel, Santa Catalina, opened 1890 and now celebrating 125 years of service. People like Winston Churchill, King Juan Carlos, Maria Callas, Agatha Christie, Gregory Peck, Prince Charles of England and the President of China have been guests here.

The interior as well as the exterior is kept in old fashioned colonial style. Lots of dark wood, brass and marble. Tove and I went there one evening to visit friends from home on a weeks vacation in Las Palmas.

See: <http://www.hotelsantacatalina.com>



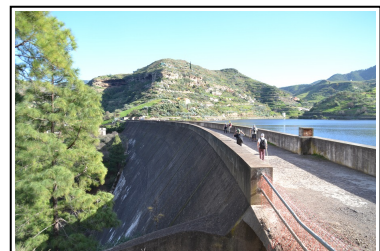
We also had time for a number of mountain hikes. Many start (or end) in Cruz de Tejeda, a road crossing at 1500 meters above sea with a few small restaurants and the Parador (Hotel), designed by the famous Canarian painter Néstor Martín-Fernández de la Torre and his brother.



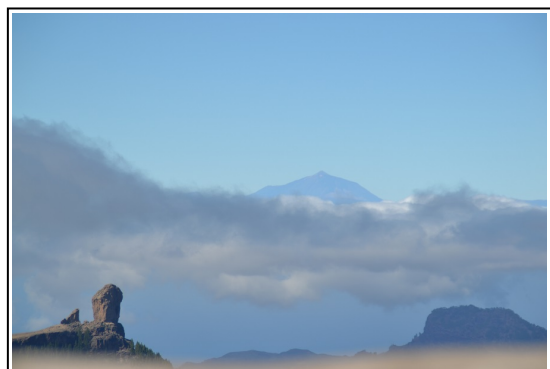
I took the pictures above on a hike that starts in Cruz de Tjededa and goes mainly downhill to the village of Lanzarote. About 6 kilometers, first on a hillside with fantastic views and then through a pine forest.



Nature here is so beautiful. The pictures speak for them self.



One day we rented cars and drove off to the water basin close to Lugarejo. A long drive, first to Artenara and then down to the village. Here we walked around the lake, up into the Tamabada forest and finally back to Lugarejo.



Most of the time however, we take a bus up the mountains where the hike starts. This walk, from Cruz de Tejeda, passes the highest point on Gran Canaria (Pico Nieves, 1950 m).



Pico Nieves is a popular start point for downhill mountain biking. We met this one just below the top. Once on the top you need to study the map and decide which way to come down again. There is a big military radio installation close to the top. Once when we were there two F17 fighters flew by, several times, very close.



It is a fantastic advantage to have an experienced leader on a hike that can show you the way and tell you what you see. Björn is one. He knows every corner of the mountains, he knows the bus routes and he walks faster than anybody else. One time he took us on a walk to the village of Tenteniguada. Here we met a local brass band that played for us, Banda Gran Canaria.



2015 was coming to an end and we would soon leave Gran Canaria. First we would celebrate Christmas though, the third time in Las Palmas ! As usual, Swedish Ulrika Törnros arranged choir concerts in the English church. These pictures are from the Santa Lucia concert of 2015.



Many Christmas traditions in Spain and other Catholic countries are the similar to those in Scandinavia. Hanging a Santa Claus doll on the outside of your house however, I have only seen i Spain and Portugal.



So, finally, after two and a half years in the Canary Islands it was time to move on. We were adviced by good friends to take as much provisions as possible because prices in the Caribbean were higher than in Las Palmas. It took us three rounds to different stores to get everything we wanted.

This is the end of 2015. In the beginning of next year we cross the Atlantic and then plan to cruise the islands of the Caribbean.



End of Las Palmas 2015

